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THE  
KING'S HIGHWAY.

VOL. I.

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THE

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LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS.

THE  
KING'S HIGHWAY.

A NOVEL.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL,"  
ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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New-Street-Square.



TO  
CHRISTIAN ADAM FRIES,  
OF  
HEIDELBERG,

AS A TESTIMONY OF AFFECTIONATE REGARD  
FROM ONE WHO WILL NEVER CEASE TO FEEL GRATEFUL FOR  
HIS PARENTAL KINDNESS  
TO A STRANGER IN A FOREIGN LAND,  
AND WHO MUST ALWAYS REGARD, WITH ADMIRATION AND ESTEEM,  
THAT COMBINATION OF DEPTH OF FEELING,  
FINENESS OF TASTE, ACCURACY OF JUDGMENT,  
AND BENEVOLENCE OF HEART,  
WHICH HE SO EMINENTLY DISPLAYS,  
AND WHICH HAVE  
EVER DISTINGUISHED THE TRULY GREAT MERCHANT ;

THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED, BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,  
G. P. R. JAMES.



# THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

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## CHAPTER I.

THOUGH the weather was hot and sultry, and the summer was at its height, yet the evening was gloomy, and low angry clouds hung over the distant line of the sea, when, under the shelter of some low-browed cliffs upon the Irish coast, three persons stood together, two of whom were talking earnestly. About four or five miles from the shore, looking like a spectre upon the misty back ground of clouds, appeared a small brig with her canvass closely reefed, though there was little wind stirring, and nothing announced the approach of a gale, unless it were a long heavy swell that heaved up the bosom of the ocean as if with a suppressed sob. The

three persons we have mentioned were standing together close at the foot of the rocks ; and, though there was nothing in their demeanour which would imply that they were seeking concealment by the points and angles of the cliff, —for they spoke loud, and one of them laughed more than once with the short but jocund laugh of a heart whose careless gaiety no circumstances can repress,— yet the spot was well calculated to hide them from any eye, unless it were one gazing down from the cliffs above, or one looking towards the shore from the sea.

The party of which we speak comprised two men not quite reached the middle age, and a fine noble-looking boy of perhaps eight years old or a little more ; but all the conversation was between the two elder, who bore a slight family likeness to each other. The one had a cloak thrown over his arm, and a blue handkerchief bound round his left hand. His dress in other respects was that of a military man of the period ; a long-waisted, broad-tailed coat, with a good deal of gold lace and many large buttons upon it, enormous riding boots, and a heavy sword.

He had no defensive armour on, indeed, though those were days when the soldierly cuirass was not yet done away with ; and on his head he only wore an ordinary hat trimmed round with feathers.

He seemed, however, to be a personage perfectly well able to defend his own, being not much short of six feet in height ; and though somewhat thin, extremely muscular, with long bony arms and a wide deep chest. His forehead was high and open, and his eye frank and clear, having withal some shrewdness in its quick twinkle. The countenance was a good one ; the features handsome, though a little coarse ; and if it was not altogether prepossessing, the abatement was made on account of a certain indescribable look of dissipation — not absolutely to say debauchery, but approaching it — which mingled with the expression of finer things, like nightshade filling up the broken masses of some ruined temple. His hair was somewhat prematurely grizzled ; for he yet lacked several years of forty, and strong lines, not of thought, were marked upon his brow.

He was, upon the whole, a man whom many people would have called a handsome, fine-looking man; and there was certainly in his countenance that indescribable something, which can only be designated by the term *engaging*.

While conversing with his companion, which he did frankly and even gaily, laughing, as we have said, from time to time, there was still a peculiarity which might be supposed to show that for some reason he was not perfectly at his ease, or perfectly sure of the man to whom he spoke. In general, he did not look at him, though he gazed straight forward; but, as is very frequently the case with us all, when we are talking to a person whom we doubt or dislike, he looked beyond him, from time to time, however, turning his eyes full upon the countenance of his comrade, and keeping them fixed upon him for several moments.

The second personage of the party was a man somewhat less in height than the other, but still tall. He was two or three years younger; handsome in features; graceful in person; and withal possessing an air of distinc-

tion which the other might have possessed also, had it not been considerably diminished by the certain gay and swaggering look which we have already noticed. His dress was not so completely military as that of the first, though there was scarf and sword-knot, and gold-fringed belt and leathern gloves, with wide cuffs, which swallowed up the arms almost to the elbows.

He laughed not at all, and his tone was grave, but smooth and courtly, except when, ever and anon, there mingled with what he was saying in sweet and placid words, some bitter and sarcastic tirade, which made his companion smile, though it moved not a muscle of his own countenance.

We have said that there was a third in the group, and that third was a boy of about eight years of age. It is scarcely possible to conceive any thing more beautiful than his countenance, or to fancy a form more replete with living grace than his. His hair swept round his clear and open countenance in dark wavy curls; and while he held the taller of

the two gentlemen by the hand, he gazed forward over the wide melancholy sea, which came rolling up towards their feet, with a look full of thought, and perhaps of anxiety. There was certainly grief in that gaze; for the black eyelashes which surrounded those large blue eyes became, after a moment or two, moistened with something bright like a tear; and apparently utterly inattentive to the conversation between his two companions, he still turned away, fully occupied with the matter of his own thoughts.

It is time, however, for us to take notice of that to which he did not attend.

“Not a whit, Harry, not a whit,” said the taller of the two: “there are certain portions of good and evil scattered through the world, and every man must take his share of both. I have taken care, as you well know, to secure a certain portion of the pleasures of this life. It was not natural that the thing should last for ever, so I have quite made up my mind to drinking the bitters since I have sipped the sweets. On this last business I have staked my all, and lost my all; and if my poor brother had not done the



same, and lost his life into the bargain, I should not much care for my part. On my honour and soul it does seem to me a strange thing, that here poor Morton, who would have done service to every body on earth, who was as good as he was brave, and as clever as he was good, should fall at the very first shot, and I go through the whole business with nothing but this scratch of the hand. I did my best to get myself killed too; for I will swear that I was the last man upon our part that left the bank of the Boyne. But just as half a dozen of the fellows had got me down, and were going to cut my throat because I would not surrender, there came by the fellow they call Bentinck, I think, who called to them not to kill me now that the battle was over. I started up, saying, 'There is one honest Dutchman at least,' and made a dart through them. They would have caught me, I dare say, but he laughed aloud; and I heard him call to them not to follow me, saying, 'That one on either side made no great difference.' I may chance to do that fellow a good turn yet in my day."

"That may well be," replied the other; "for since your brother's death, if you are sure he is killed, you are the direct heir to an earldom, and to estates that would buy a score of German princes."

While he thus spoke, the person he addressed suddenly turned his eyes full upon his face, and looked at him intently for a minute. He then answered, "Sure he is dead, Harry? Did I not tell you that he died in my arms? Would it not have been a nice thing now, if I had been killed too? There would have been none between you and the earldom then. Upon my life, I think you ought to have it: it would just suit you; you would make such a smooth-tongued, easy courtier to this Dutch vagabond, whom you are going over to, I can see, notwithstanding all your asseverations;" and he laughed aloud as he spoke.

"Nonsense, Lennard, nonsense!" replied his companion: "I neither wish you killed, my good cousin, nor care for the earldom, nor am going over to the usurper, though, Heaven knows, you'll do no good to any one, the earldom will

do no good to you, and the usurper, perhaps, may do much good to the country. But had either of the three been true, I should certainly have given you up to the Prince of Orange, instead of sharing my last fifty guineas with you, to help you off to France."

His companion gazed down upon the ground with a grim smile, and remained for a moment without answering; he then looked up, gave a short laugh, and replied, "I must not be ungrateful, cousin mine, I thank you for the money with all my heart and soul; but I cannot think that you have run yourself so hard as that either; you must have made mighty great preparations which have not appeared, to spend your snug little patrimony upon a king who did not deserve it, and for whom you did not fight after all."

"I should have fought if I could have come up in time," replied the other, with his brows darkening. "I suppose you do not suspect me of being unwilling to fight, Lennard?"

"Oh, no, man! no!" replied his cousin: "it does not run in our blood; we have all fighting drops in our veins; and I know you can fight

well enough when it suits your purpose. As for that matter, I might think myself a fool for fighting in behalf of a man who wo'n't fight in his own behalf; but it is his cause, not himself, Harry, I fought for."

"Bubbles, bubbles, Lennard," replied the other, "'tis but a mere name!"

"And what do we all fight for, from the cradle to the grave?" demanded his cousin — "bubbles, bubbles, Harry. Through England and Ireland, not to say Scotland, there will be to-morrow morning, which I take it is Sunday, full five thousand priests busily engaged in telling their hearers, that love, glory, avarice, and ambition, are nothing but — bubbles! So I am but playing the same game as the rest. I wish to Heaven the boat would come round though, for I am beginning to think it is as great a bubble as the rest. — Run down, Wilton, my boy," he said, speaking to the youth that held him by the hand — "run down to that point, and see if you can discover the boat creeping round under the cliffs."

The boy instantly darted off without speak-

ing, and the two gentlemen watched him in silence. After a moment, however, the shorter of the two spoke, with his eyes still fixed on the child, and the slight sneer curling his lip—"A fine boy that, Lennard!" he said. "A child of love, of course!"

"Doubtless," answered the other; "but you will understand he is not mine.—It is a friend's child that I have promised to do the best for."

"He is wondrous like your brother Morton," rejoined his companion: "it needs no marriage certificate to tell us whose son he is."

"No; God speed the poor boy!" replied the other gentleman, "he is like his father enough. I must do what I can for him, though Heaven knows what I am to do either for him or myself. It is long ere he can be a soldier, and I am not much accustomed to taking heed of children."

"Where is his mother?" demanded the cousin: "whatever be her rank, she is most likely as rich as you are, and certainly better able to take care of him."

"Pshaw!" replied the other—"I might look

long enough before I found her. The boy has never known any thing about her either, so that would not do. But here he comes, here he comes, so say no more about it."

As he spoke, the boy bounded up, exclaiming, "I see the boat, I see the boat coming round the rock;" and the moment after, a tolerable-sized fishing boat was seen rounding the little point that we have mentioned; and the two cousins, with the boy, descended to the water's edge. During the few minutes that elapsed before the boat came up to the little landing-place where they stood, the cousins shook hands together, and bade each other adieu.

"Well, God speed you, Harry," said the one; "you have not failed me at this pinch, though you have at many another."

"Where shall I write to you, Lennard," demanded the other, "in case that any thing should happen to turn up to your advantage?"

"Oh! to the Crown, to the Crown, at St. Germain's," replied the elder; "and if it be for any thing to my advantage, write as quickly as possible, good cousin.—Come, Wilton, my boy,

come, here's the boat ! Thank God we have not much baggage to embark. — Now, my man," he continued, speaking to one of the fishermen who had leaped out into the water, "lift the boy in, and the portmanteau, and then off to yonder brig, with all the sail you can put on."

Thus saying, he sprang into the boat, received the boy in his arms, and waved his hand to his cousin, while the fishermen pushed off from the shore.

The one who was left behind folded his arms upon his chest, and gazed after the boat as she bounded over the water. His brow was slightly clouded, and a peculiar sort of smile hung upon his lip ; but after thus pausing for a minute or two, he turned upon his heel, walked up a narrow path to the top of the cliff, and mounting a horse which was held for him by a servant, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the edge, he rode away, whistling as he went, not like Cimon, for want of thought, but from the very intensity of thought.

## CHAP. II.

THE horseman of whom we have spoken in the last chapter rode slowly on about two hundred yards farther, and there the servant advanced and opened a gate, by means of which the path they were then upon communicated with a small road between two high banks leading down to the sea-side. The moment that the gentleman rode forward through the gate, his eyes fell upon a figure coming up apparently from the sea-shore. It was that of a woman, seemingly well advanced in life, and dressed in the garb of the lower orders : there was nothing particular in her appearance, except that in her gait and figure she was more decrepit than from her countenance might have been expected. The tears were streaming rapidly down her face, however ; and though she suddenly paused on perceiving the stranger, she could not com-



mand those tears from flowing on, though she turned away her head to conceal them.

The stranger slightly pulled in his horse's rein, looked at her again, and then gazed thoughtfully down the road towards the sea, as if calculating what the woman could have been doing there, and whether she could have seen the departure of his two late companions.

The servant who was behind him seemed to read his master's thoughts; for being close to him shutting the gate, he said in a low tone, "That's the old woman with whom the young gentleman lodged; for I saw her when the Colonel went there this morning to fetch him away."

The moment the man had spoken, his master pushed forward his horse again, and riding up to the woman accosted her at once.

"Ah, my good woman," he said, "you are grieving after your poor little boy; but do not be cast down, he will be taken good care of."

"God bless your honour," replied the woman, "and thank you, too, for comforting me: he's a dear good boy, that's true; but the Colonel has

taken him to France, so I shall never see him more."

"Oh yes you may, my good lady," replied the stranger: "you know I am his cousin—his father's first cousin; so if you want to hear of him from time to time, perhaps I could put you in the way of it. If I knew where you lived, I would come and call upon you to-night, and talk to you about it before I go on to Dublin."

"Your honour's going to Dublin, are you?" said the woman suddenly and sharply, while the blood mounted into the cheek of her companion, as if from some feeling of embarrassment. She continued, however, before he could reply, saying, "With a thousand thanks to your honour, I shall be glad to see you; and if I could but hear that the poor boy got well to France, and was comfortable, I think I should be happy all my life."

"But where do you live, my good woman?" demanded the horseman: "we have not much time to lose, for the sun is going down, and the night is coming on."

“And a stormy night it will be,” said the woman, who, though she had very little of the Irish accent, seemed to have not a little of that peculiar obliquity of mind, which so often leads the Irishman to follow the last idea started, however loosely it may be connected with the main subject of discourse. “As to where I live,” she continued, “it’s at the small neat cottage at the end of the lane; the best house in the place to my mind, except the priest’s and the távern; and for that matter it’s my own property too.”

“Well, I will come there in about an hour,” said her companion, “and we will talk it all over, my good lady, for I must leave this place early to-morrow.”

Away went the stranger as he spoke at a rapid pace, towards an Irish village or small town of that day, which lay at the distance of about a mile and a half from the sea-shore. It was altogether a very different place, and bore a very different aspect, from any other collection of houses, of the same number and extent within the shores of the Sister Island. It was

situated upon the rise of a steep hill, at the foot of which ran a clear shallow stream, from whose margin up to the top of the acclivity ran two irregular rows of houses, wide apart, and scattered at unequal distances, on the two sides of the high road. They were principally hovels, of a single story in height ; a great proportion of them formed of nothing but turf, with no other window but a hole covered with a board, and sometimes not that. Others, few and far between, again, were equally of one story, but were neatly plastered with clay, and ornamented with a wash of lime ; and besides these, were three or four houses which really deserved the name — the parish priest's, the tavern, and what was called the shop.

These rows of dwellings were raised on two high but sloping banks, which were covered with green turf and extended perhaps fifty yards in width between the houses and the road : this long strip of turf affording the inhabitants plenty of space for dunghills and dust heaps, with occasional stacks of turf, and a detached sort of summer-house now and then

for a pig, in those cases where his company was not preferred in the parlour.

Here, too, the chickens used to meet in daily convocation; and here the priest's bull would occasionally take a morning walk to the detriment of the dunghills and the frailer edifices, to the danger of the children, and the indignation of the other animals, who might seem to think that they had a right prescriptive to exclusive possession.

Between these two tracts of debatable land was interposed a paved high road, twice as broad as it needed to have been, and furnished with a stone gutter down the centre, into which flowed, from every side, streams not Castalian; while five or six ducks, belonging to the master of the shop, acted as the only town scavengers, and a large black sow, with a sturdy farrow of eleven young pigs, rolled about in the full enjoyment of the filth and dirt, seeming to represent the mayor and town council of this rural municipality.

At the top of the hill two or three lanes turned off, and in one of these was situated the

cottage which the old lady had indicated as her dwelling. The stranger, however, rode not thither at once, but, in the first place, stopped at the tavern, as it was called (being neither more nor less than a small public house), and throwing his rein to the servant, he dismounted, and paused to order some refreshment. When this was done, he took his way at once to the house of the priest, which was a neat white building, showing considerable taste in all its external arrangements. The stranger was immediately admitted, and remained for about half an hour, at the end of which time he came out, accompanied as far as the little wicket gate by a very benign and thoughtful-looking man past the middle age, whose last words, as he took leave of the stranger, were, "Alas, my son! she was so beautiful, and so charitable, that it is much to be lamented that she was in all respects a cast-away."

The stranger then returned to the tavern, and sat down to a somewhat black and angular roasted fowl, which, however, proved better to the palate than the eye; and to this he added

somewhat more than a pint of claret, which — however strange it may seem to find such a thing in an Irish pot-house — might, for taste and fragrance, have competed with the best that ever was found at the table of prince or peer: nor was such a thing uncommon in that day. This done, and when five or six minutes of meditation — that kind of pleasant meditation which ensues when the inner man is made quite comfortable — had been added to his moderate food and moderate potation, the stranger rose, and with a slow and thoughtful step walked forth from the inn, and took his way towards the cottage to which the old woman had directed him.

The sun was by this time sinking below the horizon, and a bright red glow from his declining rays spread through the atmosphere, tinging the edges of the long, liny, lurid clouds which were gathering thickly over the sky. The wind, too, had risen considerably, and was blowing with sharp quick gusts increasing towards a gale, so that the stranger was obliged

to put his hand to his large feathered hat to keep it firm upon his head.

In the mean time the old woman had returned home, and her first occupation was to indulge her grief; for, sitting down at the little table in her parlour, she covered her eyes with her hands, and wept till the tears ran through her fingers. After a time, however, she calmed herself, and rising, looked for a moment into a small looking-glass, which showed her face entirely disfigured with tears. She then went into a little adjacent room, which, as well as the parlour, was the image of neatness and cleanliness. She there took a towel, dipped it in cold water, and seemed about to bathe away the traces from her cheeks. The next moment, however, she threw the towel down, saying, "No, no! why should I?" She then returned to the parlour, and called down the passage, "Betty, Betty!"

An Irishwoman, of about fifty years of age, clothed much in the same style, and not much worse than her mistress, appeared in answer to her summons, and, according to the



directions she now received, lighted a single candle, put up a large heavy shutter against the parlour window, and retired. The mistress of the house remained for some time sitting at the table, and apparently listening for every step without; though from time to time, when a heavier and heavier blast of wind shook the cottage where she sat, she gazed up towards the sky, and her lips moved as if offering a prayer.

At length some one knocked loudly at the door, and starting up, she hurried to open it and give entrance to the stranger whom we have mentioned before. She put a chair for him, and stood till he asked her to sit down.

"So, my good lady," he said, "you lived a long time with Colonel and Mrs. Sherbrooke."

"Oh! bless you, yes, sir," replied the woman, "ever since the Colonel and the young lady came here, till she died, poor thing, and then I remained to take care of the boy, dear beautiful fellow."

"You seem very sorry to lose him," rejoined

the stranger, "and, doubtless, were sadly grieved when Mrs. Sherbrooke died."

"You may well say that," replied the woman: "had I not known her quite a little girl? and to see her die, in the prime of her youth and beauty, not four and twenty years of age. You may well say I was sorry. If her poor father could have seen it, it would have broke his heart; but he died long before that, or many another thing would have broken his heart as well as that."

"Was her father living," demanded the stranger, "when she married Colonel Sherbrooke?"

The woman, without replying, gazed inquiringly and steadfastly on the stranger's countenance for a moment or two; who continued, after a short pause — "Poo, poo, I know all about it; I mean when she came away with him."

"No, sir," replied the woman; "he had been dead then more than a year."

"Doubtless," replied the stranger, "it was, as you implied, a happy thing for him that he

did not live to see his daughter's fate; but how was it, I wonder, as she was so sweet a creature, and the Colonel so fond of her, that he never married her?"

The woman looked down for a moment; but then gazed up in his face with a somewhat rueful expression of countenance, and a shake of the head, answering, "She was a Protestant, you know."

The stranger looked surprised, and asked, "Did she always continue a Protestant, my good woman? I should have thought love could have worked more wonderful conversions than that."

"Ah! she died as she lived, poor thing," replied the woman, "and with nobody with her either, but I and one other; for the Colonel was away, poor man, levying troops for the king — that is, for King James, sir; for your honour looks as if you were on the other side."

The stranger was silent and looked abstracted; but at length he answered, somewhat listlessly, "Really, my good woman, one does not know what side to be of. — It is raining very

hard to-night, unless those are the boughs of the trees tapping against your window."

"Those are the large drops of rain," replied the woman, "dashed against the glass by the south-west wind. It will be an awful night; and I think of the ship."

"I will let you hear of the boy," rejoined the stranger in an indifferent tone, "as soon as I hear of him myself;" and taking up his hat from the table he seemed about to depart, when a peculiar expression upon the woman's countenance made him pause, and, at the same time, brought to his mind that he had not even asked her name.

"I thought your honour had forgotten," she replied, when he asked her the question at length: "they call me Betty Harper; but Mrs. Harper will find me in this place, if you put that upon your letter: and now that we are asking such sort of questions, your honour wouldn't be offended, surely, if I were to ask you your name too?"

"Certainly not, my good lady," he replied; "I am called Harry Sherbrooke Esquire, very

much at your service. — Heavens, how it blows and rains !”

“ Perhaps it is nothing but a wind-shower,” replied the woman ; “ if your honour would like to wait until it has ridden by.”

“ Why I shall get drenched most assuredly if I go,” he answered, “ and that before I reach the inn ; but I will look out and see, my good lady.”

He accordingly proceeded into the little passage, and opened the door, followed by his companion. They were instantly saluted, however, by a blast of wind that almost knocked the strong man himself down, and made the woman reel against the wall of the passage.

Every thing beyond — though the cottage, situated upon a height, looked down the slope of the hill, over the cliffs, to the open sea — was as dark as the cloud which fell upon Egypt : a darkness that could be felt ! and not the slightest vestige of star or moon, or lingering ray of sunshine, marked to the eye the distinction between heaven, earth, and sea.

Sherbrooke drew back, as the wind cut him, and the rain dashed in his face; but at that very moment something like a faint flash was seen, apparently at a great distance, and gleaming through the heavy rain. The woman instantly caught her companion's wrist tight in her grasp, exclaiming, "Hark!" — and in a few seconds after, in a momentary lull of the wind, was heard the low booming roar of a distant cannon.

"It is a signal of distress," cried the woman. "Oh! the ship, the ship! The wind is dead upon the shore, and the long reef, out by the Battery Point, has seen many a vessel wrecked between night and morning."

While she spoke, the signal of distress was seen and heard again.

"I will go down and send people out to see what can be done," said the stranger, and walked away without waiting for reply. He turned his steps towards the inn, muttering as he went, "There's one, at least, on board the ship, that wo'n't be drowned, if there's truth in an old proverb! so if the vessel be wrecked to-

night, I had better order breakfast for my cousin to-morrow morning — for he is sure to swim ashore.”

It was a night, however, on which no hope of reaching land could cheer the wrecked seamen. The tide was approaching the full; the wind was blowing a perfect hurricane; the surf upon a high rocky beach, no boat could have lived in for a minute; and the strongest swimmer — even if it had been within the scope of human power and skill to struggle on for any time with those tremendous waves — must infallibly have been dashed to pieces on the rocks that lined the shore. The minute guns were distinctly heard from that town, and several other villages in the neighbourhood. Many people went to the tops of the cliffs, and some down to the sea-shore, where the waves did not reach the bases of the rocks. One gentleman, living in the neighbourhood, sent out servants and tenantry with links and torches, but no one ever could clearly distinguish the ship; and could only perceive that she must be in the direction of a dangerous rocky shoal called

the Long Reef, at about two miles' distance from the shore.

The next morning, however, her fate was more clearly ascertained; not that a vestige of her was to be seen out at sea, but the whole shore for two or three miles was covered with pieces of wreck. The stern-post of a small, French-built vessel, and also a boat considerably damaged in the bow, and turned keel upwards, came on shore as Harry Sherbrooke and his servant were themselves examining the scene. The boat bore, painted in white letters, "*La Coureuse de Dunkerque*."

"That is enough for our purpose, I should suppose," said the master, pointing to the letters with a cane he had in his hand, and addressing his servant — "I must be gone, Harrison, but you remain behind and do as I bade you."

"Wait a moment yet, sir," replied the man: "you see they are bringing up a body from between those two rocks, — it seems about his size and make too;" and approaching the spot to which he pointed, they found some of the



country people carrying up the body of a French officer, which afterwards proved to be that of the commander of the brig, which had been seen during the preceding day. After examining the papers which were taken from the pockets of the dead man, one of which seemed to be a list of all the persons on board his vessel, Sherbrooke turned away, merely saying to his servant, "Take care and secure that paper, and bring it after me to Dublin as fast as possible."

The man bowed his head, and his master walked slowly and quietly away.

## CHAP. III.

Now whatever might be the effect of all that passed, as recorded in the last chapter, upon the mind of Harry Sherbrooke, it is not in the slightest degree our intention to induce the reader to believe that the two personages, the officer and the little boy, whom we saw embark for the brig which was wrecked, were amongst the persons who perished upon that occasion. True it is that every person the ship contained found a watery grave, between sunset and sunrise on the night in question. But to explain how the whole took place we must follow the track of the voyagers in the boat.

As soon as they were seated, Lennard Sherbrooke threw his arms affectionately round the boy, drew him a little closer to his bosom, and kissed his broad fair forehead ; while the boy on his part, with his hand leaning on the officer's

knee, and his shoulder resting confiding on his bosom, looked up in his face with eyes of earnest and deep affection. In such mute conference they remained for some five or ten minutes; while the hardy sailors pulled away at the oars, their course towards the vessel lying right in the wind's eye. After a minute or two more, Lennard Sherbrooke turned round, and gazed back towards the shore, where he could now plainly perceive his cousin beginning to climb the little path up the cliff. After watching him for a moment with a look of calculating thought, he turned towards the boy again, and saw that there were tears in his eyes, which sight caused him to bend down, saying, in a low voice, "You are not frightened, my dear boy?"

"Oh no, no!" replied the boy—"I am only sorry to go away to a strange place."

Lennard Sherbrooke turned his eyes once more towards the shore, but the form of his cousin had now totally disappeared. He then remained musing for a minute or two, while the fishermen laboured away making no very great progress against the wind. At the distance of

about a mile or a mile and a half from the shore, Lennard Sherbrooke turned round towards the man who was steering, and made some remarks upon the excellence of the boat. The man, proud of his little vessel, boasted her capabilities, and declared that she was as seaworthy as any frigate in the navy.

"I should like to see her tried," said Sherbrooke.

"I should not wonder if she were well tried to-night," replied the man.

For a moment or two the officer made no rejoinder; but then approaching the steersman nearer still, he said, in a low voice, "Come, my man, I have something to tell you. — We must alter our course very soon; I am not going to yon Frenchman at all."

"Why, then, where the devil are you going to?" demanded the fisherman; and he proceeded, with tones and in language which none but an Irishman must presume to deal with, to express his astonishment, that after having been hired by the other gentleman to carry the person who spoke to him and the boy to the

French brig of war; where berths had been secured for them, he should be told that they were not going there at all.

The stranger suffered him to expend all his astonishment without moving a muscle, and then replied, with perfect calmness, " My good friend, you are a Catholic, I have been told, and a good subject to King James —— "

" God bless him ! " interrupted the man heartily; but Sherbrooke proceeded, saying, " In these days one may well be doubtful of one's own relations, and I have a fancy, my man, that unless I prevent any one from knowing my course, and where I am, I may be betrayed where I go, and betrayed if I stay. Now what I want you to do is this, to take me over to the coast of England, instead of to yonder French brig."

The man's astonishment was very great; but he seemed to enter into the motives of his companion with all the quick perception of an Irishman. There were innumerable difficulties, however, which he did not fail to start; and he asserted manfully, that it was utterly impossible

for them to proceed upon such a voyage at once. In the first place, they had no provisions; in the next place, there was the wife and children, who would not know what was become of them; in the third place, it was coming on to blow hard right upon the coast. So that he proved there was, in fact, not only danger and difficulty, but absolute impossibility, opposed to the plan which the gentleman wished to follow.

In the meanwhile the four seamen, who were at the oars, laboured away incessantly, but with very slow and difficult efforts. Every moment the wind rose higher and higher, and the sun's lower limb touched the waters, while they were yet two miles from the French brig.

A part of the large red disk of the descending orb was seen between the sea and the edge of the clouds that hung upon the verge of the sky, pouring forth from the horizon to the very shore a long line of blood-red light, which, resting upon the boiling waters of the ocean, seemed as if the setting star could indeed "the multitudinous sea incarnadine, making the green one red."

That red light, however, showed far more clearly than before how the waters were already agitated; for the waves might be seen distinctly, even to the spot in the horizon where they seemed to struggle with the sun, heaving up their gigantic heads till they appeared to overwhelm him before he naturally set.

The arguments of the fisherman apparently effected that thing which is so seldom effected in this world; namely, to convince the person to whom they were addressed. I say *seldom*, for there have been instances known in remote times of people being convinced. They puzzled him, however, and embarrassed him very much, and he remained for full five minutes in deep and anxious thought.

His reverie, however, was brought to an end suddenly, by a few words which the fisherman whispered to him. His countenance brightened; a rapid and brief conversation followed in a low tone, which ended in his abruptly holding out his hand to the good man at the helm, saying, "I trust to your honour."

"Upon my soul and honour," replied the fisherman, grasping his proffered hand.

The matter now seemed settled,—no farther words passed between the master of the boat and his passenger; but the seaman gave a rapid glance to the sky, to the long spit of land called the Battery Point, and to the southward whence the wind was blowing so sharply.

"We can do it," he muttered to himself, "we can do it;" and he then gave immediate orders for changing the boat's course, and putting out all sail. His companions seemed as much surprised by his change of purpose, as he had been with the alteration of his passenger's determination. His orders were nevertheless obeyed promptly, the head of the boat was turned away from the wind, the canvass caught the gale, and away she went like lightning, heeling till the little yard almost touched the water. Her course, however, was not bent back exactly to the same spot from which she started, and it now became evident that it was the fisherman's intention to round the Battery Point.



Lennard Sherbrooke was not at all aware of the dangerous reef that lay so near their course ; but it soon became evident to him that there was some great peril, which required much skill and care to avoid ; and as night fell, the anxiety of the seamen evidently became greater. The wind by this time was blowing quite a hurricane, and the rushing roaring sound of the gale and the ocean was quite deafening. But about half an hour after sunset that peculiar angry roar, which is only heard in the neighbourhood of breakers, was distinguished to leeward ; and looking in that direction, Sherbrooke perceived one long white line of foam and surf, rising like an island in the midst of dark and struggling waters.

Not a word was said : it seemed as if scarcely a breath was drawn. In a few minutes the sound of the breakers became less distinct ; a slight motion was perceivable in the arm of the man who held the tiller, and in about ten minutes the effect of the neighbouring headlands was found in smoother water and a lighter gale, as the boat glided calmly and

steadily on, into a small bay, not many hundred miles from Baltimore. The rest of their voyage, till they reached the shore again, was safe and easy: the master of the boat and his men seemed to know every creek, cove, and inlet, as well as their own dwelling places; and directing their course to a little but deep stream, they ran in between two other boats, and were soon safely moored.

The boy, by Sherbrooke's direction, had lain himself down in the bottom of the boat, wrapped up in a large cloak; and there, with the happy privilege of childhood, he had fallen sound asleep, nor woke till danger and anxiety were passed, and the little vessel safe at the shore. Accommodation was easily found in a neighbouring village, and on the following day, one, and only one, of the boat's crew went over to the spot from which they had set out on the preceding evening. He returned with another man, both loaded with provisions. There was much coming and going between the village and the boat during the day. By eventide the storm had sobbed itself

away; the sea was calm again, the sky soft and clear; and beneath the bright eyes of the watchful stars the boat once more took its way across the broad bosom of the ocean, with its course laid directly towards the English shore.

## CHAP. IV.

THOSE were days of pack-saddles and pillions —days certainly not without their state and display; but yet days in which persons were not valued according to the precise mode of their dress or equipage, when hearts were not appraised by the hat or gloves, nor the mind estimated by the carriages or horses.

Man was considered far more abstractedly then than at present; and although illustrious ancestors, great possessions, and hereditary claims upon consideration, were allowed more weight than they now possess, yet the minor circumstances of each individual, —the things that filled his pocket, the dishes upon his table, the name of his tailor, or the club that he belonged to, —were seldom, if ever, allowed to affect the appreciation of his general character.

However that might be, it was an age, as we

have said, of pack-saddles and pillions ; and no one, at any distance from the capital itself, would have been the least ashamed to be seen with a lady or child mounted behind him on the same horse, while he jogged easily onward on his destined way.

It was thus that about a quarter of an hour before night-fall a tall powerful man was seen riding along through one of the north-western counties of England, with a boy of about eight years of age mounted on a pillion behind him, and steadying himself on the horse by an affectionate embrace cast round the waist of his elder companion.

Lennard Sherbrooke—for the reader has already divined that this was no other than the personage introduced to him in our first chapter—Lennard Sherbrooke then was still heavily armed, but in other respects had undergone a considerable change. The richly laced coat had given place to a plain dark one of greenish brown; the large riding boots remained; and the hat, though it kept its border of feathers, was divested of every other ornament. There

were pistols at the saddle-bow, which indeed were very necessary in those days to every one who performed the perilous and laborious duty of wandering along the King's Highway; and in every other respect the appearance of Lennard Sherbrooke was well calculated neither to attract cupidity nor invite attack.

About ten minutes after the period at which we have again introduced him to our readers, the traveller and his young companion stopped at the door of an old-fashioned inn, or rather at the porch thereof; for the door itself with a retiring modesty stood at some distance back, while an impudent little portico with carved oak pillars, of quaint but not inelegant design, stood forth into the road, with steps leading down from it to the sill of the sunk doorway. An ostler ran out to take the horse, and helped the boy down tenderly and carefully. Sherbrooke himself then dismounted, looked at his beast from head to foot, and then ordering the ostler to give him some hay and water, he took the boy by the hand and entered the house.

The ostler looked at the beast, which was tired, and then at the sky, over which the first shades of evening were beginning to creep, thinking as he did so that the stranger might quite as well put up his beast for the night. In the mean time, however, Sherbrooke had given the boy into the charge of the hostess, had bidden her prepare some supper for him, and had intimated that he himself was going a little farther, but would soon return to sleep at her hospitable dwelling. He ordered to be brought in and given into her charge also a small portmanteau, — smaller than that which he had taken with him into the boat, — and when all this was done, he kissed the boy's forehead tenderly and left him, mounting once more his weary beast, and plodding slowly along upon his way.

It was a very sweet evening : the sun, half way down behind one of the distant hills, seemed, like man's curiosity, to overlook unheeded all the bright and beautiful things close to him, and to gaze with his eyes of light full upon the objects further from him, through

which the wayfarer was bending his way. The line of undulating hills, the masses of a long line of woodland, some deep valleys and dells, a small village with its church and tower on an eminence, were all in deep blue shadow; while, in the foreground, every bank and slope was glittering in yellow sunshine, and a small river, that wound along through the flatter part of the ground, seemed turned into gold by the great and glorious alchymist, as he sunk to his rest.


The heart of the traveller who wandered there alone was ill, very ill at ease. Happily for himself, as he was now circumstanced, the character of Sherbrooke was a gay and buoyant one, not easily depressed, bearing the load lightly; but still he could not but feel the difficulties, the dangers, and the distresses of a situation, which, though shared in by very many at that moment, was rather aggravated by such being the case, and had but small alleviation even from hope.

In the first place, he had seen the cause to which he had attached himself utterly ruined



by the base irresolution of a weak monarch, who had lost his crown by his tyranny, and who had failed to regain it by his courage. In the next place, for his devotion to that cause, he was a banished and an outlawed man, with his life at the mercy of any one who chose to take it. In the next, he was well nigh penniless, with the life of another, dear, most dear to his heart, depending entirely upon his exertions.

The heart of the traveller then was ill, very ill at ease, but yet the calm of that evening's sunshine had a sweet and tranquillising effect. There is a mirror — there is certainly a moral mirror in our hearts, which reflects the images of the things around us; and every change that comes over nature's face is mingled sweetly, though too often unnoticed, with the thoughts and feelings called forth by other things. The effect of that calm evening upon Lennard Sherbrooke was not to produce the wild, bright, visionary dreams and expectations, which seem the peculiar offspring of the glowing morning, or of the bright and risen day; but it was the counterpart, the image, the reflection of



that evening scene itself to which it gave rise in his heart. He felt tranquillised, he felt more resolute, more capable of enduring. Grief and anxiety subsided into melancholy and resolution, and the sweet influence of the hour had also an effect beyond : it made him pause upon the memories of his past life, upon many a scene of idle profligacy, revel, and riot,—of talents cast away and opportunity neglected,—of fortune spent and bright hopes blasted,—and of all the great advantages which he had once possessed utterly lost and gone, with the exception of a kind and generous heart : a jewel, indeed, but one which in this world, alas ! can but too seldom be turned to the advantage of the possessor.

On these things he pondered, and a sweet and ennobling regret came upon him that it should be so—a regret which might have gone on to sincere repentance, to firm amendment, to the retrieval of fortunes, to an utter change of destiny, had the circumstances of the times, or any friendly voice and helping hand, led his mind on upon that path wherein it

had already taken the first step, and had opened out before him a way of retrieval, instead of forcing him onward down the hill of destruction. But, alas! those were not times when the opportunity of doing better was likely to be allowed to him; nor were circumstances destined to change his course. His destiny, like that of many Jacobites of the day, was but to be from ruin to ruin; and let it be remembered, that the character and history of Leonard Sherbrooke are not ideal, but are copied faithfully from a true but sad history of a life in those times.

All natural affections sweeten and purify the human heart. Like every thing else given us immediately from God, their natural tendency is to wage war against all that is evil within us; and every single thought of amendment and improvement, every regret for the past, every better hope for the future, was connected with the thought of the beautiful boy he had left behind at the inn; and, elevated by his love for a being in the bright purity of youth, he thought of him and his situation again and

again; and often as he did so, the intensity of his own feelings made him murmur forth half audible words all relating to the boy, or to the person he was then about to seek, for the purpose of interesting him in the poor youth's fate.

"I will tell him all and every thing," he said, thus murmuring to himself as he went on: "he may drive me forth if he will; but surely, surely, he will protect and do something for the boy. What, though there have been faults committed and wrong done, he cannot be so hard-hearted as to let the poor child starve, or be brought up as I can alone bring him up."

Such was still the conclusion to which he seemed to come; and at length when the sun had completely gone down, and at the distance of about three miles from the inn, he paused before a large pair of wooden gates, consisting of two rows of square bars of painted wood placed close together, with a thick heavy rail at the top and bottom, while two wooden obelisks, with their steeple-shaped summits, formed the gate posts. Opening the gates, as one well

familiar with the lock, he now entered the smaller road which led from them through the fields towards a wood upon the top of the hill. At first the way was uninteresting enough, and the faint remains of twilight only served to show some square fields within their hedge-rows cut in the most prim and undeviating lines around. The wayfarer rode on, through that part of the scene with his eyes bent down in deep thought; but when he came to the wood; and, following the path — which, now kept with high neatness and propriety, wound in and out amongst the trees, and then sweeping gently round the shoulder of the hill, exposed a beautiful deer park — he had before his eyes a fine Elizabethan house, rising grey upon a little eminence at the distance of some four or five hundred yards, — it seemed that some old remembrance, some agitating vision of the days gone by, came over the horseman's mind. He pulled in his rein, clasped his hands together, and gazed around with a look of sad and painful recognition. At the end of a minute or two, however, he

recovered himself, rode on to the front of the house we have mentioned, and dismounting from his horse, pulled the bell-rope, which action was instantly followed by a long peal heard from within.

"It sounds cold and empty," said the wayfarer to himself, "like my reception, and perhaps my hopes."

No answer was made for some time; and though the sounds had been loud enough, as the traveller's ears bore witness, yet they required to be repeated before any one came to ask his pleasure.

"This is very strange!" he said, as he applied his hand to the bell-rope again. "He must have grown miserly, as they say, indeed. Why I remember a dozen servants crowding into this porch at the first sound of a horse's feet."

A short time after some steps were heard within; bolts and bars were carefully withdrawn, and an old man in a white jacket, with a lantern in his hand, opened the heavy oaken door, and gazed upon the stranger.

"Where is the Earl of Byerdale?" demanded the horseman, in apparent surprise; "is he not at home?"

The old man gazed at him for a moment from head to foot, without replying, and then answered slowly and somewhat bitterly, "Yes, he is at home — at his long home, from which he'll never move again! Why, he has been dead and buried this fortnight."

"Indeed!" cried the traveller, putting his hand to his head, with an air of surprise, and what we may call dismay; "indeed! and who has discharged the servants and shut up the house?"

"Those who have a right to do it," replied the old man sharply; "for my lord was not such a fool as to leave his property to be spent, and his place mismanaged, by two scape-graces whom he knew well enough."

As he spoke, without farther ceremony he shut the door in the stranger's face, and then returned to his own abode in the back part of the house, chuckling as he went, and murmuring to himself, "I think I have paid him now

for throwing me into the horsepond, for just telling a little bit of a lie about Ellen the laundry maid. He thought I had forgotten him ! Ha ! ha ! ha !”

The traveller stood confounded ; but he made no observation, he uttered no word, he seemed too much accustomed to meet the announcement of fresh misfortune to suffer it to drive him from the strong-hold of silence. Sweeter or gentler feelings might have done it : he might have been tempted to speak aloud in calm meditation and thought, either gloomy or joyful ; but his heart, when wrung and broken by the last hard grasp of fate, like the wolf at his death, was dumb.

He remained for full two minutes, however, beneath the porch motionless and silent ; then springing on his horse's back, he urged him somewhat rapidly up the slope. Ere he had reached the top, either from remembering that the beast was weary, or from some change in his own feelings, he slackened his pace, and gave himself up to meditation again. The first agony of the blow that he had received



was now over, and once again he not only reasoned with himself calmly, but expressed some of his conclusions in a murmur.

“What !” he said, “a peer without a penny ! the name attainted too, and all lands and property declared forfeit ! No, no ! it will never do ! Years may bring better times ! — Who knows ? the attainder may be reversed ; new fortunes may be gained or made ! The right dies not, though it may slumber ; exists, though it be not enforced. A peer without a penny ! no, no ! — far better a beggar with half a crown !”

Thus saying he rode on, passed through the wood we have mentioned, — the dull meadows, and the wooden gates ; and entering the high road, was proceeding towards the inn, when an event occurred which effected a considerable change in his plans and purposes.

It was by this time one of those dark nights, the most propitious that can be imagined for such little adventures as rendered at one time the place called Gad's Hill famous alike in

story and in song. It wasn't that the night was cloudy, for, to say sooth, it was a fine night, and manifold small stars were twinkling in the sky; but the moon, the sweet moon, was at that time in her infancy, a babe of not two days old, so that the light she afforded to her wandering companions through the fields of space was of course not likely to be much. The stars twinkled, as we have said, but they gave no light to the road; and on either side there were sundry brakes, and lanes, and hedges, and groups of trees which were sufficiently shady and latitant in the mid-day, and which certainly were impervious to any ray of light then above the horizon.

The mind of Lennard Sherbrooke, however, was far too busy about other things to think of dangers on the King's Highway. His purse was certainly well armoured against robbery; and the defence was in the inside and not on the out; so that — had he thought on the matter at all, which he did not do — he might very probably have thought, in his light recklessness, he wished he might meet with a highwayman,

in order to try whether he could not rob better than be robbed.

However, as I have said, he thought not of the subject at all. His own situation, and that of the boy Wilton, occupied him entirely; and it was not till the noise of a horse's feet coming rapidly behind him sounded close at his shoulder, that he turned to see by whom he had been overtaken.

All that Sherbrooke could perceive was, that it was a man mounted on a remarkably fine horse, riding with ease and grace, and bearing altogether the appearance of a gentleman.

"Pray, sir," said the stranger, "can you tell me how far I am from the inn called the Buck's Horns, and whether this is the direct road thither?"

"The inn is about two miles on," replied Sherbrooke, "on the left-hand side of the way, and you cannot miss it, for there is no other house for five miles."

"Only two miles!" said the stranger; "then there is no use of my riding so fast, risking to break my neck, and my horse's knees."

Sherbrooke said nothing, but rode on quietly, while the stranger, still reining in his horse, pursued the high road by the traveller's side.

"It is a very dark night," said the stranger, after a minute or two's silence.

"A very dark night, indeed!" replied Sherbrooke, and the conversation again ended there.

"Well," said the stranger, after two or three minutes more had passed, "as my conversation seems disagreeable to you, sir, I shall ride on."

"Good night, sir," replied Sherbrooke, and the other appeared to put spurs to his horse. At the first step, however, he seized the traveller's rein, uttering a whistle: two more horsemen instantly darted out from one side of the road, and in an instant the well-known words "Stand and deliver!" were audibly pronounced in the ears of the traveller.

Now it is a very different thing, and a much more difficult thing, to deal in such a sort with three gentlemen of the road, than with one; but nevertheless, as we have before shown, Lennard Sherbrooke was a stout man, nor was he at all

a faint-hearted one. A pistol was instantly out of one of the holsters, pointed, and fired, and one of his assailants rolled over upon the ground, horse and man together. His heavy sword was free from the sheath the moment after; and exclaiming, "Now there's but two of you, I can manage you," he pushed on his horse against the man who had seized his bridle, aiming a very unpleasant sort of oblique cut at the worthy personage's head, which, had it taken effect, would probably have left him with a considerable portion less of skull than that with which he entered into the conflict.

Three things, however, happened almost simultaneously, which gave a new aspect altogether to affairs. The man upon Sherbrooke's left hand fired a pistol at his head, but missed him in the darkness of the night. At the same moment the other man at whom he was aiming the blow, and who being nearer to him of course saw better, parried it successfully, but abstained from returning it, exclaiming, "By heavens ! I believe it is Lennard Sherbrooke !"

"If you had asked me," replied Sherbrooke,

"I would have told you that long ago: pray who are you?"

"I am Frank Bryerly," replied the man: "hold your hands, hold your hands every one, and let us see what mischief's done! Dick Harrison, I believe, is down. Devilish unfortunate, Sherbrooke, that you did not speak."

"Speak!" returned Sherbrooke, "what should I speak for? these are not times for speaking over much."

"I am not hurt, I am not hurt," cried the man called Harrison; "but hang him, I believe he has killed my horse, and the horse had well nigh killed me, for he reared and went over with me at the shot:—get up, brute, get up," and he kicked the horse in the side to make him rise. Up started the beast upon his feet in a moment, trembling in every limb, but still apparently not much hurt; and upon examination it proved that the ball had struck him in the fleshy part of the shoulder, producing a long, but not a deep wound, and probably causing the animal to rear by the pain it had occasioned.

As soon as this was explained satisfactorily, a somewhat curious scene was presented by Leonard Sherbrooke, standing in the midst of his assailants, and shaking hands with two of them as old friends, while the third was presented to him with all the form and ceremony of a new introduction. But such things, alas! were not uncommon in those days; and gentlemen of high birth and education have been known to take to the King's highway — not like Prince Hal for sport, but for a mouthful of bread.

"Why, Frank," said Sherbrooke, addressing the one who had seized his horse's rein, "how is this, my good fellow?"

"Why, just like every thing else in the world," replied the other in a gay tone. "I'm at the down end of the great see-saw, Sherbrooke, that's all. When last you knew me, I was a gay Templer, in not bad practice, bamboozling the juries, deafening the judges, making love to every woman I met, ruining the tavern-keepers, and astounding the watch and the chairmen. In short, Sherbrooke, very much like yourself."

"Exactly, Frank," replied Sherbrooke, "my own history within a letter or so: we were always called the counterparts, you know; but what became of you after I left you, a year and a half ago, when this Dutch skipper first came over to usurp his father-in-law's throne?"

"Why, I did not take it quite so hotly as you did," replied the other; "but I remained for some time after the king was gone, till I heard he had come back to Ireland; then, of course, I went to join him, fared with the rest, lost every thing, and here I am — after having been Templer, and then a captain in the king's guards — doing the honours of the King's Highway."

"Stupidly enough," replied Lennard Sherbrooke; "for here the first thing that you do is to attack a man who is just as likely to take as to give, and ask for a man's money who has but a guinea and a shilling in all the world."

"I am but raw at the trade, I confess," replied the other, "and we are none of us much more learned. The truth is, we were only



practising upon you, Sherbrooke, we expect a much better prize to-morrow; but what say you, if your condition be such, why not come and take a turn upon the road with us? It is the most honourable trade going now-a-days. Treason and treachery, indeed, carry off the honours at court; but there are so many traitors of one gang or another, that betraying one's friend is become a vulgar calling. 'Take a turn with us on the road, man! take a turn with us on the road!'

"Upon my soul," replied Sherbrooke, "I think the plan not a bad one; I believe if I had met you alone, Frank, I should have tried to rob you."

"Don't call it rob," replied Frank Bryerly "call it soliciting from, or relieving. But it is a bargain, Sherbrooke, isn't it?"

Lennard Sherbrooke paused and thought for a moment, with the scattered remains of better feelings, like some gallant party of a defeated army trying still to rally and resist against the overpowering force of adverse circumstances. He thought, in that short moment, of what

other course he could follow ; he turned his eyes to the east and the west, to the north and the south, for the chance of one gleam of hope, for the prospect of any opening to escape. It was in vain, his last hope had been trampled out that night. He had not even money to fly, and seek, on some other shore, the means of support and existence. He had but sufficient to support himself and his horse, and the poor boy, for three or four more days. Imagination pictured that poor boy's bright countenance, looking up to him for food and help, and finding none, and grasping Bryerly's hand, he said, in a low voice, "It is a bargain. Where and how shall I join you?"

"Oh!" replied the other, "we three are up at Mudicot's inn, about four miles there: you had better turn your horse and go back with us."

"No," replied Sherbrooke, "I have some matters to settle at the little inn down there: all that I have in the world is there, and that, Heaven knows, is little enough; I will join you to-morrow."

"Sherbrooke," said Bryerly, drawing him a little on one side and speaking low, "I am a rich man, you know: I have got ten guineas in my pocket: you must share them with me."

Pride had already said "No!" but Bryerly insisted, saying, "You can pay me in a day or two."

Sherbrooke thought of the boy again, and accepted the money; and then bidding his companions adieu for the time, he left them and returned to the inn.

The poor boy, wearied out, had once more fallen asleep where he sat, and Sherbrooke, causing him to be put to bed, remained busily writing till a late hour at night.

He then folded up and sealed carefully that which he had written, together with a number of little articles which he drew forth from the portmanteau; he then wrote some long directions on the back of the packet, and placing the whole once more in the portmanteau, in a place where it was sure to be seen, if any inquisitive eye examined the contents of the receptacle, he turned the key and retired to rest.

The whole of the following day he passed in playing with and amusing little Wilton ; and so much childish gaiety was there in his demeanour, that the man seemed as young as the child. Towards evening, however, he again ordered his horse to be brought out ; and, having paid the landlady for their accommodation up to that time, he again left the boy in her charge and put his foot in the stirrup. He had kissed him several times before he did so ; but a sort of yearning of the heart seemed to come over him, and turning back again to the door of the inn, he once more pressed him to his heart, ere he departed.

## CHAP. V.

JOURNEYS were in those days at least treble the length they are at present. It may be said that the distance from London to York, or from Carlisle to Berwick, could never be above a certain length. Measured by a string probably such would have been the case; but if the reader considers how much more sand, gravel, mud, and clay, the wheels of a carriage had to go through in those days, he will easily see how it was the distances were so protracted.

At all events, fifty or sixty miles was a long, laborious journey; and at whatever hour the traveller might set out upon his way, he was not likely to reach the end of it, without becoming a "borrower from the night of a dark hour or two."

Such was the case with the tenant of a large cumbrous carriage, which, drawn heavily on by

four stout horses, wended slowly on the King's Highway, not very far from the spot where the wooden gates that we have described raised their white faces by the side of the road.

The panels of that carriage, as well as the ornaments of the top thereof, bore the arms of a British earl; and there was a heavy and dignified swagger about the vehicle itself, which seemed to imply a consciousness even in the wood and leather of the dignity of the person within. He, for his own part, though a graceful and very courtly personage, full of high talent, policy, and wit, had nothing about him at all of the pomposity of his vehicle; and at the moment which we refer to, namely, about two hours after nightfall, tired with his long journey, and sated with solitary thought, he had drawn a fur-cap lightly over his head, and, leaning back in the carriage, enjoyed not unpleasant repose.

To be woke out of one's slumbers suddenly at any time, or by any means, is a very unpleasant sensation; but there are few occasions that we can conceive, on which such an event is more

disagreeable than when we are thus woke, to find a pistol at our breast, and some one demanding our money.

The Earl of Sunbury was sleeping quietly in his carriage with the most perfect feeling of security, though those indeed were not very secure times; when suddenly the carriage stopped, and he started up. Scarcely, however, was he awake to what was passing round, than the door of the carriage was opened, and a man of gentlemanly appearance, with a pistol in his right hand, and his horse's bridle over the left arm, presented himself to the eyes of the peer. At the same time, through the opposite window of the carriage, was seen another man on horseback; while the Earl judged, and judged rightly, that there must be others of the same fraternity at the heads of the horses, and the ears of the postilions.

The Earl was usually cool and calm in his demeanour under most of the circumstances of life; and he therefore asked the pistol-bearing gentleman, much in the same tone that one would ask one's way across the country, or re-

ceive a visiter whom we do not know, "Pray, sir, what may be your pleasure with me?"

"I am very sorry to delay your lordship even for a moment," replied the stranger, very much in the same tone as that with which the Earl had spoken; "but I do it for the purpose of requesting, that you would disburden yourself of a part of your baggage, which you can very well spare, and which we cannot. I mean, my lord, shortly and civilly, to say, that we must have your money, and also any little articles of gold and jewellery that may be about your person."

"Sir," replied the Earl, "you ask so courteously, that I should be almost ashamed to refuse you, even were your request not backed by the soft solicitation of a pistol. There, sir, is my purse, which probably is not quite so full as you might desire, but is still worth something. Then as to jewellery, my watch, seals, and these trinkets are at your disposal. Farther than these I have but this ring, for which I have a very great regard; and I wish that some way could be pointed out by which I might be able to redeem it at a future time: it may be worth some half dozen



guineas, but certainly not more, to any other than myself. In my eyes, however, it only appears as a precious gage of old affection, given to me in my youth by one I loved, and which has remained still upon my finger, till age has wintered my hair."

"I beg that you will keep the ring," replied the highwayman; "you have given enough already, my lord, and we thank you."

He was now retiring with a bow, and closing the door, but the Earl stopped him, saying, in a tone of some feeling, "I beg your pardon; but your manner, language, and behaviour, are so different from all that might be expected under such circumstances, that I cannot but think necessity more than inclination has driven you to a dangerous pursuit."

"Your lordship thinks right," replied the highwayman: "I am a poor gentleman, of a house as noble as your own, but have felt the hardships of these times more severely than most."

He was again about to retire; but the Earl once more spoke, saying, "Your behaviour to

me, sir, especially about this ring, has been such that, without asking impertinent questions, I would fain serve you. — Can I do it?”

“I fear not, my lord, I fear not,” replied the stranger. Then seeming to recollect himself, with a sudden start, he approached nearer to the carriage, saying, “I had forgot — you can, my lord! — you can.”

“In what manner?” demanded the peer.

“That I cannot tell your lordship here and now,” replied the highwayman: “time is wanting, and, doubtless, my companions’ patience is worn away already.”

“Well,” replied the Earl, “if you will venture to call upon me at my own house, some ten miles hence, which, as you know me, you probably know also, I will hear all you have to say, serve you if I can, and will take care that you come and go with safety.”

“I offer you a thousand thanks, my lord,” replied the other, “and will venture as fearlessly as I would to my own chamber.” \*

\* It may be interesting to the reader to know that the whole of this scene, even to a great part of the dialogue, actually took place in the beginning of the reign of William III.

Thus saying, he drew back and closed the door; and then making a signal to his companions to withdraw from the heads of the horses, he bade the postilions drive on, and sprang upon his own beast.

“What have you got, Lennard? what have you got?” demanded the man who was at the other door of the carriage: “what have you got—you have had a long talk about it?”

“A heavy purse,” replied Sherbrooke: “what the contents are, I know not—a watch, a chain, and three gold seals.—I’m almost sorry that I did this thing.”

“Sorry!” cried the other; “why you insisted upon doing it yourself, and would let no other take the first adventure out of your hands.”

“I did not mean that,” replied Sherbrooke, “I did not mean that at all! If the thing were to be done, and I standing by, I might as well do it as see you do it. What I mean is, that I am sorry for having taken the man’s money at all!”

“Pshaw!” replied the other: “you forget that he is one of the enemy, or rather, I should say, a traitor to his king, to his native-born

prince, and therefore is fair game for every true subject of King James."

"He stood by him a long time," replied Sherbrooke, "for all that—as long, and longer than the King stood by himself."

"Never mind, never mind, Colonel," said one of the others, who had come up by this time; "you wo'n't need absolution for what's been done to-night; and I would bet a guinea to a shilling, that if you ask any priest in all the land, he will tell you, that you have done a good deed instead of a bad; but let us get back to the inn as quick as we can, and see what the purse contains."

The road which the Earl of Sunbury was pursuing passed the very inn to which the men who had lightened him of his gold were going; but there was a back bridle-path through some thick woods to the right of the road, which cut off a full mile of the way, and along this the four keepers of the King's Highway urged their horses at full speed, endeavouring, as was natural under such circumstances, to gallop away reflection, which, in spite of all that they

assumed, was not a pleasant companion to any of the four. It very often happens that the exhilaration of success occupies so entirely the portion of time during which remorse for doing a bad action is most ready to strike us, that we are ready to commit the same error again, before the last murmurs of conscience have time to make themselves heard. Those who wish to drown her first loud remonstrances give full way and eager encouragement to that exhilaration; and now, each of the men whom we have mentioned, except Sherbrooke, went on encouraging their wild gaiety, leaping the gates that here and there obstructed their passage, instead of opening them; and in the end arriving at the inn a full quarter of an hour before the carriage of the Earl passed the house on its onward way.

The vehicle stopped there for a minute or two, to give the horses hay and water; and much was the clamour amongst the servants, the postilions, and the ostlers, concerning the daring robbery that had been committed; but the postilions of those days, and eke the keepers of inns, were wise people in their generation,

and discreet withal. They talked loudly of the horror, the infamy, and the shamefulness, of making the King's Highway a place of general toll and contribution; but still they abstained most scrupulously from taking any notice of gentlemen who were out late upon the road, especially if they went on horseback.

## CHAP. VI.

It was about two days after the period of which we have spoken, when the Earl of Sunbury, caring very little for the loss he had met with on the road, and thinking of it merely as one of those unpleasant circumstances which occur to every man now and then, sat in his library with every sort of comfort and splendour about him, enjoying in dignified ease the society of mighty spirits from the past, in those works which have given and received an earthly immortality. His hand was upon Sallust; and having just been reading the awful lines which present in Catiline the type of almost every great conspirator, he raised his eyes and gazed on vacancy, calling up with little labour, as it were, a substantial image to his mind's eye of him whom the great historian had displayed.

The hour was about nine o'clock at night,

and the windows were closed, when suddenly a loud ringing of the bell made itself heard, even in the Earl's library. As the person who came, by applying at the front entrance, evidently considered himself a visiter of the Earl, that nobleman placed his hand upon the open page of the book and waited for a farther announcement with a look of vexation, muttering to himself, "This is very tiresome: I thought, at all events, I should have had a few days of tranquillity and repose."

"A gentleman, my lord," said one of the servants entering, "is at the gate, and wishes to speak with your lordship."

"Have you asked what is his business?" demanded the Earl.

"He will not mention it, my lord," replied the servant, "nor give his name either; but he says your lordship told him to call upon you."

"Oh! admit him, admit him," said the peer; put a chair there, and bring some chocolate."

After putting the chair, the man retired, and a moment after returned, saying, "The gentleman, my lord."



The door opened wide, and the tall fine form of Lennard Sherbrooke entered, leading by the hand the beautiful boy whom we have before described, who now gazed about him with a look of awe and surprise.

Little less astonishment was visible on the countenance of the Earl himself; and until the door was closed by the servant, he continued to gaze alternately upon Sherbrooke and the boy, seeming to find in the appearance of each much matter for wonder."

"Do me the favour of sitting down," he said at length: "I think I have had the advantage of seeing you before."

"Once, my lord," replied Sherbrooke, "and then it must have been but dimly."

"Not more than once?" demanded the Earl: "your face is somewhat familiar to me, and I think I could connect it with a name."

"Connect it with none, my lord," said Sherbrooke: "that name is at an end, at least for a time: the person for whom you take me is no more. I should have thought that you knew such to be the case."

"I did, indeed, hear," said the Earl, "that he was killed at the Boyne; but still the likeness is so great, and my acquaintance with him was so slight, that ——"

"He died at the Boyne, my lord," said Sherbrooke, looking down, "in a cause which was just, though the head and object of that cause was unworthy of connection with it." The Earl's cheek grew a little red; but Sherbrooke continued, with a slight laugh, "I did not, however, come here, my lord, to offend you with my view of politics. We have only once met, my lord, that I know of in life, but I have heard you kindly spoken of by those I loved and honoured. You, yourself, told me, that if you could serve me you would; and I come to claim fulfilment of that offer, though what I request may seem both extraordinary and extravagant to demand."

The Earl bent down his eyes upon the table, and drew his lips in somewhat close, for he in no degree divined what request was coming; and he was much too old a politician to encourage applications, the very proposers of which

announced them as extravagant. "May I ask," he said, at length, "what it is you have to propose? I am quite ready to do any reasonable thing for your service, as I promised upon an occasion to which I need not farther refer."

Three servants at that moment entered the room, with chocolate, long cut slices of toast, and cold water; and the conversation being thus interrupted, the Earl invited his two guests to partake; and calling the boy to him, fondled him for some moments at his knee, playing with the clustering curls of his bright hair, and asking him many little kindly questions about his sports and pastimes.

The boy looked up in his face well pleased, and answered with so much intelligence, and such winning grace, that the Earl, employing exactly the same caress that Sherbrooke had often done before, parted the fair hair on his forehead, and kissed his lofty brow.

When the servants were gone, Sherbrooke instantly resumed the conversation. "My request, my lord," he said, "is to be a very

strange one; a request that will put you to some expense, though not a very great one; and will give you some trouble, though, would to God both the trouble and expense could be undertaken by myself."

"Perhaps," said the Earl, turning his eyes to the boy, "it may be better, sir, that we speak alone for a minute or two. I am now sure that I cannot be mistaken in the person to whom I speak, although I took you at first for one that is no more. We will leave your son here, and he can amuse himself with this book of pictures."

Thus saying he rose, patted the boy's head, and pointed out the book he referred to. He then threw open a door between that room and the next, which was a large saloon, well lighted, and having led the way thither with Sherbrooke, he held with him a low but earnest conversation for some minutes.

"Well, sir," he said at length, "well, sir, I will not, and must not refuse, though it places me in a strange and somewhat difficult situation; but indeed, indeed, I wish you would

listen to my remonstrances. Abandon a hopeless, and what, depend upon it, is an unjust cause, — a cause which the only person who could gain by it has abandoned and betrayed; yield to the universal voice of the people; or if you cannot co-operate with the government that the popular voice has called to power, at all events submit; and, I doubt not in the least, that if, coupled with promises and engagements to be a peaceful subject, you claim the titles and estates —— ”

“My lord, it cannot be,” replied Sherbrooke, interrupting him: “you forget that I belong to the Catholic church. However, you will remember our agreement respecting the papers, and other things which I shall deposit with you this night: they are not to be given to him till he is of age, under any circumstances, except that of the King’s restoration, when you may immediately make them public.”

As he spoke, he was turning away to return to the library; but the Earl stopped him, saying, “Stay yet one moment: would it not be better to give me some farther explanations? and have

you nothing to say with regard to the boy's education ? for you must remember how I, too, am situated."

"I have no farther explanations to give, my lord," replied Sherbrooke ; "and as to the boy's education, I must leave it entirely with yourself. Neither on his religious or his political education will I say a word. In regard to the latter, indeed, I may beg you to let him hear the truth, and, reading what is written on both sides, to judge for himself. Farther I have nothing to say."

"But you will understand," replied the other, with marked emphasis, "that I cannot and do not undertake to educate him as I would a son of my own. He shall have as good an education as possible ; he shall be fitted, as far as my judgment can go, for any station in the state, to enter any gentlemanly profession, and to win his way for himself by his own exertions. But you cannot and must not expect that I should accustom him to indulgence or expense in any way that the unfortunate circumstances in which he is placed may render beyond his

power to attain, when you and I are no longer in being to support or aid him."

"You judge wisely, my lord," replied Sherbrooke, "and in those respects I trust him entirely to you, feeling too deeply grateful for the relief you have given me from this overpowering anxiety, to cavil at any condition that you may propose."

"I have only one word more to say," replied the Earl, "which is, if you please, I would prefer putting down on paper the conditions and circumstances under which I take the boy: we will both sign the paper, which may be for the security of us both."

Sherbrooke agreed without hesitation; and on their return to the library, the Earl wrote for some time, while his companion talked with and caressed the boy. When the Earl had done, he handed one of the papers he had written to Sherbrooke, who read it attentively, and then signing it returned it to the Earl. That nobleman, in the mean time, had signed a counterpart of the paper which he now gave to Sherbrooke; and the latter, taking from his

pocket the small packet of various articles which we have seen him make up at the inn before he went out on the very expedition which produced his present visit to the Earl, gave it into the peer's hands, who put his seal upon it also.

This done, a momentary pause ensued, and Lennard Sherbrooke gazed wistfully at the boy. A feeling of tenderness, which he could not repress, gained upon his heart as he gazed, and seemed to overpower him; for tears came up, and dimmed his sight. At length he dashed them away; and taking the boy up in his arms, he pressed him fondly to his bosom; kissed him twice; set him down again; and then, turning to the Earl, with a brow on which strong resolution was seen struggling with deep emotion, he said, "Thank you, my lord, thank you!"

It was all he could say, and turning away hastily, he quitted the room. The Earl rang the bell, and ordered the servant to see that the gentleman's horse was brought round. He then turned and gazed upon the boy with a look of



interest; but little Wilton seemed perfectly happy, and was still looking over the book of paintings which the Earl had given to him to examine.

"What can this be?" thought the Earl, as he looked at him; "can there be perfect insensibility under that fair exterior?" And taking the boy by the hand he drew him nearer,

"Are you not sorry he is gone?" the nobleman asked.

"Oh! he will not be long away," replied the boy: "he will come back in an hour or two as he always does, and will look at me as I lie in bed, and kiss me, and tell me to sleep soundly."

"Poor boy!" said the Earl, in a tone that made the large expressive eyes rise towards his face with a look of inquiry. "You must not expect him to be back to-night, my boy. Now tell me what is your name?"

"Wilton," replied the boy; but remembering that that was not sufficient to satisfy a stranger, he added, "Wilton Brown. — But how long will it be before he comes back?"

"I do not know," replied the Earl, evading his question. "How old are you, Wilton?"

"I am past eight," replied the boy.

"Happily, an age of quick forgetfulness!" said the Earl, in a low tone to himself; and then applying his thoughts to make the boy comfortable for the night, he rang for his housekeeper, and gave her such explanations and directions as he thought fit.

## CHAP. VII.

THERE is a strange and terrible difference, in this world, between the look forward and the look back. Like the cloud that went before the hosts of the children of Israel, when they fled from the land of Egypt, an inscrutable fate lies before us, hiding with a dark and shadowy veil the course of every future day : while behind us the wide-spread past is open to the view ; and as we mark the steps that we have taken, we can assign to each its due portion of pain, anxiety, regret, remorse, repose, or joy. Yet how short seems the past to the recollection of each mortal man ! how long, and wide, and interminable, is the cloudy future to the gaze of imagination !

Many years had passed since the eventful night recorded in our last chapter ; and to the boy, Wilton Brown, all that memory comprised

seemed but one brief short hour out of life's long day.

The Earl of Sunbury had fulfilled what he had undertaken towards him, exactly and conscientiously. He was a man, as we have shown, of kindly feelings, and of a generous heart; although he was a politician, a courtier, and a man of the world. He might, too — had not some severe checks and disappointments crushed many of the gentler feelings of his heart — he might, too, have been a man of warm and enthusiastic affections. As it was, however, he guarded himself in general very carefully against such feelings, acted liberally and kindly; but never promised more, or did more, than prudence consented to, were the temptation ever so strong.

He had promised Lennard Sherbrooke that he would take the boy, and give him a good education, would befriend him in life, and do all that he could to serve him. He kept his word, as we have said, to the letter. During the first six weeks, after he had engaged in this task, he saw the boy often in the course of

every day; grew extremely fond of him; took him to London, when his own days of repose in the country were past; and solaced many an hour, when he returned home fatigued with business, by listening to the boy's prattle, and by playing with, as it were, the fresh and intelligent mind of the young being now dependent upon him for all things.

It is a false and a mistaken notion altogether, that men of great mind and intense thought are easily wearied or annoyed by the presence of children. The man who is wearied with children must always be childish himself in mind; but, alas! not young in heart. He must be light, superficial, though perhaps inquiring and intelligent; but neither gentle in spirit nor fresh in feeling. Such men must always soon become wearied with children; for very great similarity *of thought and of mind*—the paradox is but seeming — is naturally wearisome in another; while, on the contrary, similarity *of feeling and of heart* is that bond which binds our affections together. Where both similarities are combined, we may be most happy in the society

of our counterpart; but where the link between the hearts is wanting there will always be great tediousness in great similarity.

Thus the Earl of Sunbury, though, Heaven knows, no man on earth could be less childish in his keen and calculating thoughts, or in all his ordinary habits and occupations, yet found a relief, and an enjoyment, in talking with the boy, in eliciting all his fresh and picturesque ideas, and in marking the train and course which thought naturally takes before it is tutored to follow the direction of art. His own heart—for a man of the world—was very fresh; but still the worldly mind ruled it when it would; and the moment that he began to find that the boy might become too much endeared, and too necessary to him, he determined to deprive himself of the present pleasure, rather than risk the future inconvenience.

He accordingly determined to send the boy to school, and little Wilton heard the announcement with pleasure; for though by this time he had become greatly attached to the Earl, he longed for the society of beings of the same age

and habits as himself. When he was with the Earl he saw that nobleman was interested with him, but he saw that he was amused with him too; and in this respect children are very like that noblest of animals, the dog. Any one who has remarked a dog when people jest with him, and speak to him mockingly, must have seen that the creature is not wholly pleased, that he seems as if made to feel a degree of inferiority. Such also is the case with children; and little Wilton felt that the Earl was making a sort of playful investigation of his mind, even while he was jesting with him. I have said felt, because it was feeling, not thought, that discovered it; and, therefore, though he loved the Earl notwithstanding all this, he was glad to go where he heard there were many such young beings as himself.

The Earl did not think him ungrateful on account of the open expression of his delight. He saw it all, and understood it all; for he had very few of the smaller selfishnesses, which so frequently blind our eyes to the most obvious facts which impinge against our own vanities.

His was a high and noble mind, chained and thrall'd by manifold circumstances and accidents to the dull pursuits of worldly ambitions. One trait, however, may display his character : he had practised in regard to the boy a piece of that high delicacy of feeling of which none but great men are capable. He had learned and divined, from the short conversation which had taken place between himself and Lennard Sherbrooke, sufficient in regard to the boy's unfortunate situation to guide his conduct in respect to him; and now, even when alone with him in his own drawing-room or library, he asked no farther questions; he pry'd not at all into what had gone before; and though the youth occasionally prattled of the wild Irish shores, and the cottage where he had been brought up, the Earl merely smiled, but gave him no encouragement to say more.

At length, Wilton Brown went to school; and as the Earl gradually lost a part of that interest in him which had given prudence the alarm, time had its effect on Wilton also, drawing one thin airy film after another over the



events of the past, not obliterating them; but, like the effect of distance upon substantial objects, gathering them together in less distinct masses, and diminishing them both in size and clearness. When the time approached for his holidays, which were few and far between, he was called to the Earl's house, and treated with every degree of kindness; though with mere boyhood went by boyhood's graces, and the lad could not be fondled and played with as the child. The Earl never did any thing to make him feel that he was a dependant — no, not for a single moment; but as the boy's mind expanded, and as a certain degree of the knowledge of the world was gained from the habits of a public school, he explained to him, clearly and straight-forwardly, that upon his own exertions he must rely for wealth, fame, and honour. He told him, that in the country where he lived, the road to fortune, dignity, and power, was open to every man; but that road was filled with eager and unscrupulous competitors, and obstructed in many parts by obstacles difficult to be surmounted.

“They can be surmounted, Wilton, however,” he added; “and with energy, activity, and determination, that road can be trod, from one end to the other, within the space of a single life, and leave room for repose at the end. — You have often seen,” he continued, “a gentleman who visits me here, who rose from a station certainly not higher, or more fortunate than your own, — who is called, even now, the Great Lord Somers, and doubtless the same name will remain with him hereafter. He is an example for all men to follow; and his life offers an encouragement for every sort of exertion. He rose even from a very humble station of life, outstripped all competitors, and is now, as you see, in the post of Lord Keeper, owing no man any thing, but all to his own talents and perseverance. The same may be the case with you, Wilton. All that I can do, to place you in the way of winning fortune and station for yourself, I will do most willingly; but in every other respect you must keep in mind, that you are to be the artisan of your own fortune, and shape your course accordingly.”

Such was the language held towards Wilton Brown by the Earl, upon more than one occasion; and the boy took what he said to heart, remembered, pondered it, and after much thought and reflection formed the great and glorious resolution of winning honour and renown, by every exertion of his mind and body. It is a resolution that may, perhaps, have often been taken by those who ultimately have never succeeded in the attempt. It is a resolution from which some may have been wiled away by pleasure, or driven by accident. But it is a resolution which no man who afterwards proved great ever failed to take, ay, and to take early. On the head of mediocrity: on the petty statesmen who figure throughout two thirds of the world's history; on the tolerable generals who conduct the ordinary wars of the world; on the small poets and the small philosophers who fill up the ages that intervene between great men, fortune and accident may shower down the highest honours, the greatest power, the most abundant wealth; but the man who in any pursuit has reached the height of real

greatness, has set out on his career with the resolution of winning fame in despite of circumstances.

Such was the resolution which was taken, as we have said, by Wilton Brown, and the effect of that very resolution upon him, as a mere lad, was to make him thoughtful, studious, and different from any of the other youths of the school, in habits and manners.

The change was beneficial in many respects, even then. It made him strive to acquire knowledge of every sort and kind that came within his reach, and he always succeeded in some degree. It made him cultivate every talent which he felt that he possessed, and an accurate eye and a musical ear were not neglected as far as he could obtain instruction. He not only acquired much knowledge, but also much facility in acquiring; and his eager and anxious zeal did not pass unnoticed by those who taught him, so that others contributed to his first success, as well as his own efforts.

That first success was, perhaps, unexpected by any one else. The period came, at which

he was barely qualified by age to strive in competition with his schoolfellows, for one of those many excellent opportunities afforded by the kindness and wisdom of past ages, for obtaining a high education at one of the universities. He had never himself proposed to be one of the competitors on this occasion, as there was a year open before him to pursue his studies, and there were many boys at the school far older than himself.

The Earl had not an idea that such a thing would take place, as Wilton himself had always expressed the utmost anxiety to pursue a military career. He had never, indeed, even pressed him to adopt another pursuit, although he had pointed out to his *protégé*, that his own influence lay almost entirely in the political world; and his surprise, therefore, was very great, when he heard that Wilton, at the suggestion of the head master, had presented himself for examination on this very first occasion, and had carried off the highest place from all his competitors.

On his arrival in London he received him

with delight, showered upon him praises, and fitted him out liberally for his first appearance at the University.

Here, however, Wilton's first fortune seemed to abandon him. About six months after his matriculation, he had the grief to hear that the Earl had been thrown from his horse in hunting, and received various severe injuries. He hastened to one of his country seats, where that nobleman had been sojourning for the time, but found him a very different man from that which he had appeared before. He was not ill enough to need or to desire nursing and tendance, but he was quite ill enough to be irritable, impatient, and selfish; for it is a strange fact, that the very condition which renders us the most dependent on our fellow-creatures too often renders us likewise indifferent to their comfort, in our absorbing consideration of our own. Although he could sit up and walk about, and go forth into his gardens, yet he suffered great pain, which did not seem to diminish; and a frequent spitting of blood rendered him impatient and querulous, when-

ever his lowest words were not instantly heard and comprehended.

It was a painful lesson to the youth he had brought up; and when the time for Wilton's return to Oxford arrived, and the Earl, with seeming satisfaction, put him in mind that it was time to go, the young gentleman, in truth, felt it a relief from a situation in which he neither well knew how to satisfy himself, or to satisfy the invalid, towards whom he was so anxious to show his gratitude.

He returned, then, to the university, where the allowance made him by the Earl, of two hundred per annum, together with the little income which a successful competition at school had placed at his disposal, enabled him to maintain the society of that class with which he had always associated in life, and to do so with ease to himself, though not without economy.\* The Earl had asked him twice, if he had found the sum enough, and seemed much pleased when Wilton had replied that it

\* I think that the same was the college allowance of the well-known Evelyn.

was perfectly so. But from that expression he easily divined, that had it been otherwise, the Earl might have said nothing reproachful, but would not have been well satisfied.

Wilton did not mistake the motives of the Earl: he knew him to be any thing but a penurious man; and he had long seen and been aware of the motives on which that nobleman acted towards him. He knew that it was with a wish to give him every thing that was necessary and appropriate to the situation in which he was placed, but by no means to encourage expensive habits, or desires which might unfit him for the first laborious steps which he was destined to tread in the path of life. He felt, indeed, that there was an ambitious spirit in his own heart, and it caused him many a struggle in thought, to regulate its action; to guide it in the course of all that was good and right, but resolutely to restrain it from following any other path. "Ambition," he thought, "is like a falcon, and must be trained to fly only at what game I will. Its proud spirit must be broken, to bend to this, and to



submit to that; to yield even to imaginary indignities, provided they imply no sacrifice of real honour, and to strive for no false show, while I am striving for a greater object."

Thus passed a year, but during that time the Earl's health had been in no degree improved; and a number of painful events had taken place in his political course which had left his mind more irritable than before, while continual suffering had brought upon him a sort of desponding recklessness, which made him cast behind him altogether those things which he had previously considered the great objects of existence, and desire nothing but to quit for ever the scene of political strife, and pass the rest of his days in peace, if not in comfort.

Such had been the state of his mind when Wilton had last seen him in London, towards the beginning of the year 1695; but the young gentleman was somewhat surprised, about a month afterwards, to receive a sudden summons to visit the Earl in town, coupled with information, that it was his friend's design immediately to proceed to Italy, on account of his health.

The summons was very unexpected, as we have implied; but the Earl informed him in his letter that he was going without loss of time; and as the shortest way of reaching him, Wilton determined to mount his horse at once, and ride part of the way to London that night. Of his journey, however, and its results, we will speak in another chapter.

## CHAP. VIII.

THAT there are epochs in the life of every man, when all the concurrent circumstances of fortune seem to form, as it were, a dam against the current of his fate, and turn it completely into another direction, when the trifling accident and the great event work together to produce an entirely new combination around him, no one who examines his own history, or marks attentively the history of others, can doubt for a moment. It is very natural, too, to believe that there are at those moments indications in our own hearts — from the deep latent sympathies which exist between every part of nature and the rest — that the changes which reason and observation do not point out are about to take place in our destiny: for is it to be supposed, that when the fiat has gone

forth which alters a being's whole course of existence — when the electric touch has been communicated to one end of the long chain of cause and effect which forms the fate of every individual being — is it to be supposed that it will not tremble to its most remote link, especially towards that point where the greatest action is to take place?

There come upon us, it seems to me, in those times, fits of musing far deeper and more intense, excitability of feeling — perhaps of imagination too—more acute than at any other time. Perhaps, also, a determination, an energy of will is added, necessary to carry us through, with power and firmness, the struggle, or the change, or the temptation that awaits us.

When Nelson stood upon the quarter-deck of his ship, but a few minutes before the last great victory that closed a career of glory, he felt and expressed a sense that his last hour was come, that the great and final change of fate was near, and that but a few moments remained for the accomplishment of his destiny. But the indication was given to a mind that

could employ it nobly; and he to whom the foreshadowing of his fate had been afforded, even as a boy — when he determined that he would, and felt that he could, be a hero — in that last moment, when he knew that the hero's life was done, determined to die as he had lived, and used the prescience of his coming death but to promote the objects for which he had existed.

There may be some men who would say these things are not natural; but if we could see all the fine relationships of one being to another, if the mortal eye refined could view the unsubstantial as well as the substantial world, could mark the keen sympathies and near associations, and all the essences which fill up the apparent gaps between being and being, we should see, undoubtedly, that these things are most natural, and wonder at the blindness with which we have walked in darkling ignorance through the thronged and multitudinous universe.

It was somewhat late in the afternoon when Wilton Brown put his foot in the stirrup, and

set off to ride towards London. He did not hope to reach the metropolis that night, but he intended to go as far as he could, so as to insure his arrival before the hour of the Earl's breakfast on the following morning. He had ridden his horse somewhat hard during the morning before he had received the summons to town, and he consequently now set out at a slow pace. Not to weary the noble beast was, in truth, and in reality, his motive ; but there was, at the same time, in his mind, a temporary inclination to deep and intense thought, which he could by no means shake off, and which naturally disposed him to a slow and equable pace.

The sudden announcement of the Earl's determination to go abroad, without any intimation that the young man whom he had fostered from youth to manhood was to accompany him, or to follow him to the Continent, might very well set Wilton musing on his circumstances and his prospects ; but that was not the cause of his meditative mood on the present occasion, though it was the immediate cause of his giving

way to it. In truth, the inclination, which he felt to low, desponding, though deep and clear thought, had pursued him for the last four-and-twenty hours, and it was to cast it off, that he had in fact ridden so hard that very morning. Now, however, he found it necessary to yield to it; and as he rode along, he gave up his mind entirely to the consideration of the past, of the present, and the future.

The Earl had announced to him at once in his letter that he was about to leave England, but he had made no reference whatsoever to the future fate of him whom he had hitherto protected and supported. Was that protection and support still to continue? Wilton asked himself. His friend had told him that he was to win his way in the world, and was the struggle now to begin? The next question that came, was, naturally, who and what am I then? and his thoughts plunged at once into a gulf where they had often lost themselves before.

His boyhood had passed away unheeding, and he had attached no importance to his pre-

vious fate, nor made any effort to impress upon his own recollection the circumstances which preceded the period of his reception into the Earl's house. Indeed, he had never thought much upon the matter, till at length, when he had reached the age of fifteen, the Earl had kindly and judiciously spoken with him upon his future prospects, and in order to stimulate him to exertion, had pointed out to him that his fortunes depended on himself. He had then, for the first time, asked himself, "Who and what am I?" and had striven to recollect as much as possible of the past, in order to gather thence some knowledge of the present. His efforts had not been very successful.

Time, the great destroyer, envies even memory the power of preserving images of the things that he has done away or altered; and he is sure, if possible, to deface the pictures altogether, or to leave the lines less clear. With Wilton he had done much to blot out and to confuse. At first memory seemed all a blank beyond the period of his schoolboy days; but gradually one image after another



rose out of the void, and one called up another as they came. Still they were clouded and indistinct, like the vague phantoms of a dream. It was with great difficulty that he recollected any names, and could not at all tell in what land it was, that some of the brightest of his memories lay. It was all unconnected, too, with the present, and from it Wilton could derive no clue in regard to the great change that was coming. Between him and the future there appeared to hang a dark pall, which his eye could not penetrate, but behind which was Fate. He tried to combat such feelings: he tried long, as he rode, to conquer them; to put them down by the power of a vigorous mind; to overthrow sensation by thought.

When, however, he found that he could not succeed, when, after many efforts, the oppression—for I will not call it despondency—remained still as powerful as ever, he mentally turned, as if to face an enemy that pursued him, and to gaze full upon the inevitable power itself, all the more awful as it was, in the misty grandeur which shrouded the frowning features

from his view. He nerved his heart, too, and resolved, whatever it might be that was in store for him, whatever might be the change, the loss, the adversity, which all his sensations seemed to prophesy, that he would bear it with unshrinking courage, with resolute determination, nay, with what was still more with one of his disposition, with unmurmuring patience.

In the mean while, however, he strove as he went along to persuade himself that the presentiment was but the work of fancy; that there was nothing real in it; that he had excited himself to fears and apprehensions that were groundless; that the expedition of the Earl to Italy was but a temporary undertaking, and that it would most probably make no change in his situation, no alteration in his fortunes.

Thus thought he, as he rode slowly onward, when, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, he perceived another horseman, proceeding at a pace perhaps still slower than his own. The aspect of the country between Oxford and London was as different in that day from that

which it is at present as it is possible to conceive. There is nothing in all England—with all the changes which have taken place, in manners, morals, feelings, arts, sciences, produce, manufactures, and government—which has undergone so great a change, as the high roads of the empire during the last hundred and fifty years. No one can now tell, where the roads which lay between this place and that then ran. They have been dug into, ploughed up, turned hither and thither, changed into canals, or swallowed up in railroads. The face of the country, too, has been altered, by many a village built, and many an old mansion pulled down, long tracts of country brought into cultivation, and deep plantations of old trees shadowing that ground which in those days was unwholesome marsh, or barren moor. Even Hounslow Heath, beloved by many of the frequenters of the King's Highway, has disappeared under the spirit of cultivation, and left no trace of places where many a daring deed was done.

However that may be, the road which the

young traveller was following lay not at all in the direction taken by either of the present roads to Oxford; but at a short distance from High Wycombe turned off to the right — that is, supposing the traveller to be going towards London — and approached the banks of the Thames not far from Marlow. In so doing, it passed over a long range of high hills, and a wide extent of flat, common ground upon the top, which was precisely the point whereat Wilton Brown had arrived, at the very moment we began this digression upon the state of the King's Highways in those times.

This common ground of which we speak was as bleak as well might be, for the winds of heaven had certainly room to visit it as roughly as they chose; it was also uncultivated, and yet it cannot be said to have been unproductive; for, probably, there never was a space of ground of equal size, unless it were Maidenhead Thicket, which could show so rich and luxuriant a crop of gorse, heath, and fern. For a shelter to the latter, appeared scattered at unequal distances over the ground a few

stunted trees — hawthorns, beeches, and oaks. The beech, however, predominated, in honour of the county in which the common was situated; for though, probably, if we knew the origin of the name bestowed on each county in England, we should find them all significant, yet none I believe, would be found more picturesque or appropriate than that given by our good Saxon ancestors to the county in question — being Buchen-heim, or Buckingham: the home or land of the beeches.

The gorse, fern, and heath, besides a small quantity of not very rich grass, and a few wild flowers, were the only produce of the ground, except the trees that I have mentioned; and the only tenants of the place were a few sheep, by far too lean to need any one to look after them. On the edges of the common, indeed, might be found an occasional goose or two, but they were like the white settlers on the coast of Africa: venturing rarely and timidly into the interior. A high road went across this track, as I have shown; but it being necessary, from time to time, that farmers' carts, and other con-

veyances, horses, waggons, tinkers' asses, and flocks of sheep, should cross it in different directions, and as each of these travelling bodies, in common with the world in general, liked to have a way of its own, the furze and fern had been cut down in many long straight lines; and paths for horse and foot, as well as long tracks of wheels, and deep ruts, crossed and recrossed each other all over the common. To have seen it — nay, to see it now, for it exists very nearly in its primeval state — one would suppose, from all the various tracks, that it was a place of great thoroughfare, when, to say truth, though I have crossed it some twenty times or more, I never saw any travelling thing upon it but a solitary tax-cart and a gipsy's van.

It was just about the middle of this common, then, that Wilton Brown, as I have said, perceived another horseman riding along at the same slow pace as himself. Their faces were both turned one way, with a few hundred yards between them; and it appeared to the young gentleman, that the other personage whom we

have mentioned was coming in an oblique line towards the high road to which he himself was journeying. This supposition proved to be correct, as the stranger, riding along the path that he was following, came abreast of Wilton Brown upon the high road, just at the spot where a comfortable direction-post pointed with the forefinger of a rude hand carved in the wood, along a path to the left, bearing inscribed, in large letters, "To Woburn."

The young traveller examined the other with a hasty but marking glance, and perceived thereby, that he was a stout man of the middle age, between the unpleasant ages of forty and fifty, but without any loss of power or activity. He was mounted on a strong black horse, had a quick and eager eye, and altogether possessed a fine countenance, but there was some degree of shy suspicion in his look, which did not seem to indicate any very great energy or force of determination.

It now wanted not more than a quarter of an hour to sunset, and there was a bright rich yel-

low light in the western sky, which gave each traveller a fair excuse for staring into the face of the other, as if their eyes were dazzled by the beams of the declining sun.

When he had satisfied himself, Wilton Brown turned away his eyes, and rode on, gazing quietly over the wide extent of bleak common, which, to say sooth, offered a picturesque scene enough, with its scrubby trees, and its large masses of tall gorse, lying in the calm evening air; while deep blue shadows, and clear lights, resting here and there in the hollows and upon the swells, marked them out distinctly to the view.

In a moment after, however, Wilton's ears were saluted by the stranger's voice, saying, "Give you good evening, young gentleman — it has been a fine afternoon."

Now this might appear somewhat singular in the present day — when human beings have adopted a particular sort of mysterious ordinance, by which alone they can become thoroughly known and acquainted with each other — and when no man, upon any pretence



or consideration whatsoever, dare speak to a fellow-creature, until some one known to both of them has whispered some cabalistic words between them, which, in general, neither of them hear distinctly. At the time I speak of, however, acquaintance was much more easily made, so far, at least, as common civility and the ordinary charities of life went. A man might speak to another at that time, if any accidental circumstances threw them close together, without any risk of being taken for a fool, a swindler, or a brute; and there was, in short, a good-humoured frankness and simplicity in those days, which formed, to say the truth, the best part about them; for the good old times, as they are called, were certainly desperately coarse, and a trifle more vicious than the present.

Such being the case then, Wilton Brown was not in the least surprised at the address of the stranger, but turned, and replied civilly; and being, indeed, somewhat dissatisfied with the companionship of his own thoughts he suffered his horse to jog on side by side with the beast

of the stranger, and entered into conversation with him willingly enough. He found him an intelligent and clever man, with a tone and manner superior, in many points, to his dress and equipage. He seemed to speak with authority, and was conversant with the great world of London, with the court, and the camp. He knew something also of France, and its self-called great monarch. He spoke with a shrug of the shoulder and an *Alas!* of the court of Saint Germain, and the exiled royal family of England; but he said nothing that could commit him to either one party or the other; and though he certainly left room for Wilton to express his own sentiments if he chose to do so, he did not absolutely strive to lead him to any political subject, which formed in those days a more dangerous ground than at present.

Wilton, however, had not the slightest inclination to discuss politics with a stranger. Brought up by a Whig minister, educated in the Protestant religion, and fond of liberty upon principle, it may easily be imagined, that he not only looked upon those who now swayed,

and were destined to sway, the British sceptre as the lawful and rightful possessors of power in the country, but he regarded the actual sovereign himself—though he might not love him in his private character, or admire him in those acts, where the man and the monarch were too inseparably blended to be considered apart—as a great deliverer of this country, from a tyranny which had been twice tried and twice repudiated. At the same time, however, he felt for the exiled monarch. But he felt still more for his noble wife, and for his unhappy son. His own heart told him that those two had been unjustly dealt with, the one calumniated, the other punished without a fault. Nor did he blame the true and faithful servants whom adversity could not shake, and who were only loyal to a crime, who still adhered to their old allegiance, loved still the sovereign, who had never ill-treated them, and were ready again to shed their blood for the house in whose service so much noble blood had already flowed. He did not—he did not in his own heart—blame them, and he loved not to consider what necessity there

might be for putting down with the strong and unsparing hand of law the frequent renewal of those claims which had been decided upon by the awful sentence of a mighty nation.

But upon none of these subjects spoke he with the stranger. He refrained from all such topics, though they were with some skill thrown in his way; and thus the journey passed pleasantly enough for about half an hour. By that time the sun had gone down; but it was a clear bright evening, with a long twilight; and the evening rays, like gay children unwilling to go to sleep, lingered long in rosy sport with the light clouds before they would sink to rest beneath the western sky. The twilight was becoming grey, however, and the light falling short, when, at about the distance of half a mile before they reached the spot where the common terminated, the two travellers approached a rise and fall in the ground, beyond which ran a little stream with a small old bridge of one arch, not in the best repair, carrying the highway over the water with a sharp and sudden turn. Scattered about in the neighbourhood of the bridge, and on the slope

that led down to it, perched upon sundry knolls and banks, and pieces of broken ground, were a number of old beeches, mostly hollowed out by time, but still flourishing green in their decay. These trees, together with the twilight, prevented the bridge itself from being seen by the travellers; but as they came near, they heard a sudden cry, as if called forth by either terror or surprise, and Wilton instantly checked his horse to listen.

“Did you not hear a scream?” he said, addressing his companion in a low voice.

“Yes,” answered the other, “I thought I did: let us ride on and see.”

Wilton's spurs instantly touched his horse's side, and he rode quickly down the slope towards the bridge, which he well remembered, when a scene was suddenly presented to his view, which for a moment puzzled and confounded him.

Just at the turn of the bridge lay overturned upon the road one of the large, heavy, wide-topped vehicles, called a coach in those days, while round about it appeared a group of per-

sons whose situation, for a moment, seemed to him dubious, but which soon became more plain. A gentleman, somewhat advanced in life — perhaps about fifty-eight or fifty-nine, if not more — stood by the door of the carriage, from which he had recently emerged, and with him two women, one of whom was a young lady, apparently of about seventeen years of age, and the other her maid. Three men-servants stood about their master; but they had not the slightest appearance of any intention of giving aid to any one; for, though sundry were the situations and attitudes in which they stood, each of those attitudes betokened, in a greater or a less degree, the uncomfortable sensation of fear. One of them, indeed, had a brace of pistols in his two hands, but those hands dropped, as it were, powerless by his side, and his knees were bent into a crooked line, which certainly indicated no great firmness of heart.

To account for the trepidation displayed by several of the persons present, it may be necessary to state that round the overthrown vehicle

stood five personages, each of whom held a cocked pistol in his hand, and, in two instances, the hands that held those pistols were raised in an attitude of menace not to be mistaken. In one instance, the weapon of offence was pointed towards the gentleman who appeared to be the owner of the carriage; in the other, it was directed towards the head of the poor girl, his daughter, who seemed to have not the slightest intention of resisting.

This formidable gesture was accompanied by words, which were spoken loud enough for Wilton to hear, as he pushed his horse down the hill; and those words were, "Come, madam! your ear-rings, quick: do not keep us all night with your hands shaking. By the Lord, I will get them out in a quicker fashion if you do not mind."

Before we can proceed to describe what occurred next, it may be necessary to state one feature in the case, which was very peculiar, this was, that at about forty yards from the spot where the robbery was taking place, upon the top of a small bank, with his horse grazing

near, and his arms crossed upon his chest, stood a man of gentlemanly appearance and powerful frame, taking no part whatsoever in the affray; not opposing the proceedings of the plunderers, indeed, but gnawing his nether lip, as if any thing rather than well contented. He fixed a keen, even a fierce eye upon Wilton as he rode down; but neither the young gentleman himself, nor the other traveller who followed him at full speed, took any notice of him, but coming on with their pistols drawn from their holsters, they were soon in the midst of the group round the carriage.

Wilton, unaccustomed to such encounters, was not very willing to shed blood, and therefore — the chivalrous spirit in his heart leading him at once towards one particular spot in the circle — he struck the man who was brutally pointing his pistol at the girl, a blow of his clenched fist, which hitting him just under the ear, as he turned at the sound of the horse's feet, laid him in a moment motionless and stunned upon the ground.

The young gentleman by the same impulse,



and almost at the same instant, sprang from his horse, and cast himself between the lady and the assailants; but at that moment the voice of his travelling companion met his ear, exclaiming, in a thundering tone, "That is right! that is right! Now stand upon the defensive till my men come up!"

Wilton did not at all understand what this might mean; but turning to the servants already on the spot he exclaimed, in a sharp tone, "Stand forward like men, you scoundrels!" and they, seeing some help at hand, advanced a little with a show of courage.

The gentlemen of the King's Highway, however, had heard the words which Wilton's companion had shouted to him; and seeing themselves somewhat overmatched in point of numbers already, they did not appear to approve of more men coming up on the other side, before they had taken their departure. There was, consequently, much hurrying to horse. The man who had been knocked down by Wilton was dragged away by the heels, from the spot where he lay somewhat

too near to the other party; and the sharp application of the gravel to his face, as one of his companions pulled him along by the legs, proved sufficiently reviving to make him start up, and nearly knock his rescuer down.

Wilton — not moved by the spirit of an ancient Greek — felt no inclination to fight for the dead or the living body of his foe; and the whole party of plunderers were speedily in the saddle and on the retreat, with the exception of the more sedate personage on the bank. He, indeed, was more slow to mount, calling the man who had been knocked down “The Knight of the Bloody Nose” as he passed him; and then with a light laugh springing into the saddle, he followed the rest at an easy canter.

“Ha! ha! ha!” exclaimed Wilton’s companion of the road laughing, “let me be called the master of stratagems for the rest of my life! Those five fools have suffered themselves to be terrified from their booty, simply by three words from my mouth and their own imaginations.”

“Then you have no men coming up,” said Wilton.

“Not a man,” replied the other: “all my men are busy in my own house at this minute, most likely saying grace over roast pork and humming ale.”

## CHAP. IX.

THE events that happen to us in life gather themselves together into particular groups, each group separated in some degree from that which follows and that which goes before, but yet each united, in its own several parts, by some strong bond of connection, and each by a finer and less apparent ligament attached to the other groups that surround it. In short, if, as the great poet moralist has said, "All the world is a stage, and all the men and women in it only players," the life of each man is a drama, with the events thereof divided into separate scenes, the scenes gathered into grand acts, and the acts all tending to the great tragic conclusion of the whole. Happy were it for man if he, like a great dramatist, would keep the ultimate conclusion still in view.

In the life of Wilton Brown, the scene of the robbers ended with the words which we have just said were spoken by his travelling companion, and a new scene was about to begin.

The elderly gentleman to whom the carriage apparently belonged, took a step forward as the stranger spoke the last sentence, exclaiming, "Surely I am not mistaken — Sir John Fenwick, I believe:" the stranger pulled off his hat and bowed low.

"The same, your Grace," he replied: "it is long since we have met, and I am happy that our meeting now has proved, in some degree, serviceable to you."

"Most serviceable, indeed, Sir John," replied the Duke, shaking him warmly by the hand; "and how is your fair wife, my Lady Mary? and my good Lord of Carlisle, and all the Howards?"

"Well, thank your Grace," replied Sir John Fenwick, "all well. This, I presume, is your fair daughter, my Lady ——."

"She is, sir, she is," interrupted the Duke: "you have seen her as a child, Sir John;" but

pray, Sir John, introduce us to your gallant young friend, to whom we are also indebted for so much."

"He must do that for himself," replied Sir John Fenwick: "we are but the companions of the last half hour, and comrades in this little adventure."

Although accustomed to mingle with the best society; and, in all ordinary cases, free and unrestrained in his own manners, Wilton Brown felt some slight awkwardness in introducing himself upon the present occasion. He accordingly merely gave his name, expressing how much happiness he felt at the opportunity he had had of serving the Duke; but referred not at all to his own station or connection with the Earl of Sunbury.

"Wilton Brown!" said the Duke, with a meaning smile, and gazing at him from head to foot, while he mentally contrasted his fine and lofty appearance, handsome dress, and distinguished manners, with the somewhat ordinary name which he had given. "Wilton Brown!

a *nom de guerre*, I rather suspect, my young friend?"

"No, indeed, my Lord," replied Wilton: "were it worth any body's while to search, it would be found so written in the books of Christ-church."

"Oh! an Oxonian," cried the Duke, "and doubtless now upon your way to London.—But how is this, my young friend, you are in midst of term time!"

Wilton smiled at the somewhat authoritative and parental tone assumed by the old gentleman. "The fact is, my Lord Duke," he said, "that I am obliged to absent myself, but not without permission. The illness of my best friend, the Earl of Sunbury, and his approaching departure for Italy, oblige me to go to London now to see him before he departs."

"Oh, the Earl of Sunbury, the Earl of Sunbury," replied the Duke: "a most excellent man, and a great statesman: one on whom all parties rely.\* That alters the case, my young

\* Let it be remarked that this was not the Earl of Sunderland, of whom the exact reverse might have been said.

friend; and indeed, whatever might be the cause of your absence from Alma Mater, we have much to thank that cause for your gallant assistance—especially my poor girl here. Let me shake hands with you—and now we must think of what is to be done next, for it is well nigh dark; the carriage is broken by those large stones which they must have put in the way, doubtless, to stop us; and it is hopeless to think of getting on farther to-night.”

“Hopeless, indeed, my Lord,” replied Sir John Fenwick; “but your Grace must have passed on the way hither a little inn, about half a mile distant or somewhat more. There I intended to sleep to-night, and most probably my young friend too, for his horse seems as tired as mine. If your Grace will follow my advice, you would walk back to the inn, make your servants take every thing out of the carriage, and send some people down afterwards to drag it to the inn-yard till to-morrow morning.”

“It is most unfortunate!” said the Duke, who was fond of retrospects. “We sent forward the other carriage about three hours before



us, in order that the house in London might be prepared when we came."

The proposal of Sir John Fenwick, however, was adopted; and after giving careful and manifold orders to his servants, the Duke took his way back on foot towards the inn, conversing as he went with the knight. His daughter followed, with Wilton Brown by her side; and for a moment or two they went on in silence; but at length seeing her steps not very steady over the rough road upon which they were, Wilton offered his left arm to support her, having the bridle of his horse over the right.

She took it at once, and he felt her hand tremble as it rested on his arm, which was explained almost at the same moment. "It is very foolish, I believe," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "and you will think me a terrible coward, I am afraid; but I know not how it is, I feel more terrified and agitated, now that this is all over, than I did at the time."


The communication being thus begun, Wilton soon found means to soothe and quiet her. His conversation had all that ease and grace which,

combined with carefulness of proprieties, is only to be gained by long and early association with persons of high minds and manners. There was no restraint, no stiffness—for to avoid all that could give pain or offence to any one was habitual to him—and yet, at the same time, there was joined to the high tone of demeanour, a sort of freshness of ideas, a picturesqueness of language and of thought, which were very captivating, even when employed upon ordinary subjects. It is an art—perhaps I might almost call it, a faculty—of minds like his, insensibly and naturally to lead others from the most common topics, to matters of deeper interest, and thoughts of a less every-day character. It is as if two persons were riding along the high road together, and one of them, without his companion remarking it, were to guide their horses into some bridle-path displaying in its course new views and beautiful points in the scenery around.

Thus ere they reached the inn the fair girl, who leaned upon the arm of an acquaintance of half an hour, seemed to her own feelings as

well acquainted with him as if she had known him for years, and was talking with him on a thousand subjects on which she had never conversed with any one before.

The Duke, who although good-humoured and kindly, was somewhat stately, and perhaps a very little ostentatious withal, on the arrival of the party at the inn, insisted upon the two gentlemen doing him the honour of supping with him that night, "as well," he said, "as the poorness of the place would permit;" and a room apart having been assigned to him, he retired thither, with the humbly bowing host, to issue his own orders regarding their provision. The larder of the inn, however, proved to be miraculously well-stocked: the landlord declared that no town in Burgundy no nor Bordeaux itself, could excel the wine that he would produce; and while the servants with messengers from the inn brought in packages, which seemed innumerable, from the carriage, the cook toiled in her vocation; the host and hostess bustled about to put all the rooms in order, Sir John Fenwick and Wilton Brown talked at the door



of the inn, and Lady Laura retired to alter her dress, which had been somewhat deranged by the overthrow of the carriage.

At length, however, it was announced that supper was ready, and Wilton with his companion entered the room, where the Duke and his daughter awaited them. On going in, Wilton was struck and surprised ; and, indeed, he almost paused in his advance, at the sight of the young lady as she stood by her father. In the grey of the twilight, he had only remarked that she was a very pretty girl ; and as they had walked along to the inn she had shown so little of the manner and consciousness of a professed beauty, that he had not even suspected she might be more than he had first imagined. When he saw her now, however, in the full light, he was, as we have said, struck with surprise by the vision of radiant loveliness which her face and form presented. Wilton was too wise, however, and knew his own situation too well, even to dream of falling in love with a duke's daughter ; and though he might, when her eyes were turned a different way, gaze upon her and

admire, it was but as a man who looks at a jewel in a king's crown, which he knows he can never possess.

Well pleased to please, and having nothing in his thoughts to embarrass or trouble him on that particular occasion, he gave way to his natural feelings, and won no small favour and approbation in the eyes of the Duke and his fair daughter. The evening, which had begun with two of the party so inauspiciously, passed over lightly and gaily; and after supper Wilton rose to retire to rest, with a sigh, perhaps, from some ill-defined emotions, but with a recollection of two or three happy hours to be added to the treasury of such sweet things which memory stores for us in our way through life.

As the inn was very full, the young gentleman had to pass through the kitchen to reach the staircase of his appointed room. Standing before the kitchen fire, and talking over his shoulder to the landlord, who stood a step behind him, was a tall, broad-shouldered, powerful man, dressed in a good suit of green broad cloth, laced with gold. His face was to

the fire and his back to Wilton, and he did not turn or look round while the young gentleman was there. The landlord hastened to give his guest a light, and show him his room; and Wilton passed a night, which, if not dreamless, was visited by no other visions but sweet ones.

On the following morning he was up early, and approached the window of his room to throw it open, and to let in the sweet early air to visit him, while he dressed himself; but the moment he went near the window, he saw that it looked into a pretty garden laid out in the old English style. That garden, however, was already tenanted by two persons apparently deep in earnest conversation. One of those two persons was evidently Sir John Fenwick, and the other was the stranger in green and gold, whom Wilton had remarked the night before at the kitchen fire.

Seeing how earnestly they were speaking, he refrained from opening his window, and proceeded to dress himself; but he could not avoid having, every now and then, a full view of the faces of the two, as they turned backwards

and forwards at the end of the garden. Something that he there saw puzzled and surprised him: the appearance of the stranger in green seemed more familiar to him than it could have become by the casual glance he had obtained of it in the inn kitchen; and he became more and more convinced, at every turn they took before him, that this personage was no other than the man he had beheld standing on the bank, taking no part with the gentlemen of the road, indeed, but evidently belonging to their company.

This puzzled him, as we have said, not a little. Sir John Fenwick was a gentleman of good repute, whom he had heard of before now. He had married the Lady Mary Howard, daughter of the Earl of Carlisle, and, though a staunch Jacobite, it was supposed, he was nevertheless looked upon as a man of undoubted probity and honour. What could have been his business then with thieves, or at best with the companions of thieves? This was a question which Wilton could no ways solve; and after having teased himself for some time there-

with, he at length descended to the little parlour of the inn, and ordered his horse to be brought round as speedily as possible. He felt in his own bosom, indeed, some inclination to wait for an hour or two, in order to take leave of the Duke and his fair daughter; but remembering his own situation with the Earl, as well as feeling some of his gloomy sensations of the day before returning upon him, he determined to set out without loss of time. He mounted accordingly, and took his way towards London at a quick pace, in order to arrive before the Earl's breakfast hour.

There are, however, in that part of the country manifold hills, over which none but a very inhumane man, unless he were pursued by enemies, or pursuing a fox, would urge his horse at a rapid rate; and as Wilton Brown was slowly climbing one of the first of these, he was overtaken by another horseman, who turned out to be none other than the worthy gentleman in the green coat.

"Good morrow to you, Master Wilton Brown," said the stranger, pulling up his horse



as soon as he had reached him : " we are riding along the same road, I find, and may as well keep companionship as we go. These are sad times, and the roads are dangerous."

" They are, indeed, my good sir," replied Wilton, who was, in general, not without that capability of putting down intrusion at a word, which, strangely enough, is sometimes a talent of the lowest and meanest order of frivolous intellects, but is almost always found in the firm and decided—" they are, indeed, if I may judge by what you and I saw last night."

The stranger did not move a muscle, but answered quite coolly, " Ay, sad doings though, sad doings : you knocked that fellow down smartly — a neat blow, as I should wish to see : I thought you would have shot one of them, for my part."

" It is a pity you had not been beforehand with me," answered Wilton : " you seemed to have been some time enjoying the sport when we came up."

The stranger now laughed aloud. " No, no," he said, " that would not do ; I could not in-

terfere; I am not conservator of the King's Highway; and, for my part, it should always be open for gentlemen to act as they liked, though I would not take any share in the matter for the world."

"There is such a thing," replied Wilton, not liking his companion at all — "there is such a thing as taking no share in the risk, and a share in the profit."

A quick flush passed over the horseman's cheek, but remained not a moment. "That is not my case," he replied, in a graver tone than he had hitherto used; "not a stiver would I have taken that came out of the good Duke's pocket, had it been to save me from starving. I take no money from any but an enemy; and when we cannot carry on the war with them in the open field, I do not see why we should not carry it on with them in any way we can. But to attack a friend, or an indifferent person, is not at all in my way."

"Oh! I begin to understand you somewhat more clearly," replied Wilton; "but allow me to say, my good sir, that it were much better

not to talk to me any more upon such subjects. By so doing you run a needless risk yourself, and can do neither of us any good. Of course," he added, willing to change the conversation, "it was Sir John Fenwick who told you my name."

"Yes," replied the other, "but it was needless, for I knew it before."

"And yet," said Wilton, "I do not remember that we ever met."

"There you are mistaken," answered the traveller; "we met no longer ago than last Monday week. You were going down the High Street in your cap and gown, and you saw some boys looking into a tart shop, and gave them some pence to buy what they longed for."

The ingenuous colour came up into Wilton Brown's cheek, as he remembered the little circumstance to which the man alluded. "I did not see you," he said.

"But I saw you," answered the man, "and was pleased with what I saw; for I am one of those whom the hard lessons of life have taught to judge more by the small acts done in private,

than by the great acts that all mankind must see. Man's closet acts are for his own heart and God's eye; man's public deeds are paintings for the world. However, I was pleased, as I have said, and I have seen more things of you also that have pleased me well. You saw me, passed me by, and would not know me again in the same shape to-morrow; but I take many forms, when it may suit my purposes; and having been well pleased with you once or twice, I take heed of what you are about when I do see you."

Wilton Brown mused over what he said for a moment or two, and then replied, "I should much like to know what it was first induced you to take any notice of my actions at all — there must have been some motive, of course."

"Oh no," replied the other — "there is no *must*! It might have been common curiosity. Every likely youth, with a pair of broad shoulders and a soldier-like air, is worth looking after in these times of war and trouble. — But the truth is, I know those who know something of you, and, if I liked, I could introduce you

to one whom you have not seen for many a year."

"What is his name?" demanded Wilton Brown, turning sharply upon the stranger, and gazing full in his face.

"Oh! I name no names," replied the stranger; "I know not whether it would be liked or not. However, some day I will do what I have said, if I can get leave; and now I think I will wish you good morning, for here lies my road, and there lies yours."

"But stay, stay, yet a moment," said Wilton, checking his horse; "how am I to hear of you, or to see you again?"

"Oh!" replied the stranger in a gay tone, "I will contrive that, fear not! — Nevertheless, in case you should need it, you can ask for me at the tavern at the back of Beaufort House: the Green Dragon, it is called."

"And your name, your name," said Wilton, seeing the other about to ride away.

"My name, ay! I had forgot — why, your name is Brown — call me Green, if you like. One colour's just as good as another, and I

may as well keep the complexion of my good friend, the Dragon, in countenance. So you wo'n't forget, it is Mister Green at the Green Dragon, in the Green Lane at the back of Beaufort House ; and now, Mister Brown, I leave you a brown study, to carry you on your way."

So saying, he turned his horse's head, and cantered easily over the upland which skirted the road to the left. After he had gone about a couple of hundred yards, Wilton saw him stop and pause as if thoughtfully for a minute. But without turning back to the road, he again put spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in a few moments.

Wilton then rode on to London, without farther pause or adventure of any kind ; but it were vain to say, that, in this instance, " care did not sit behind the horseman ;" for many an anxious thought, and unresolved question, and intense meditation, were his companions on his onward way. Fortunately, however, his horse was not troubled in the same manner ; and about five minutes before the hour he had proposed to himself, Wilton was standing before

the house of the Earl in St. James's Square. The servants were all rejoiced to see him, for, unlike persons in his situation in general, he was very popular amongst them; but the Earl, he was informed, had not yet risen, and the account the young gentleman received of his health made him sad and apprehensive.

## CHAP. X.

IN about an hour's time, the Earl of Sunbury descended to breakfast ; and he expressed no small pleasure at the unexpected appearance of his young *protégé*.

“ You were always a kind and an affectionate boy, Wilton,” he said ; “ and you have kept your good feelings unchanged, I am happy to find. Depend upon it, when one can do so, amongst all the troubles, and cares, and corrupting things of this world, we find in the feelings of the heart that consolation, when sorrows and disappointments assail us, which no gift or favour of man can impart. I believe, indeed, that within the last six months, with all the bodily pains and mental anxieties I have had to suffer, I should either have died or gone mad, had not my mind obtained relief, from time to time, in the enjoyment of the beauties of nature,



the works of art, and the productions of genius. — Nor have my thoughts been altogether unoccupied with you," he added, after a moment's pause, "and that occupation would have been most pleasant to my mind, Wilton, inasmuch as through your whole course you have given me undivided satisfaction. But, alas! I cannot do for you all that I should wish to do. You know that my own estates are all entailed upon distant relatives, whom I do not even know. I am not a man, as you are well aware, to accumulate wealth; and all I can possibly assure to you is the enjoyment of the same income I have hitherto allowed you, and which, in case of my death, I will take care shall be yours."

Wilton listened, as may be supposed, with affection and gratitude; but he tried, after expressing all he felt, and assuring the Earl that he possessed as much as he desired, to put an end to a conversation which was rendered the more painful to him by the marked alteration which he perceived in the person of his friend since he had last seen him.

The Earl, however, would not suffer the sub-

ject to drop, replying, " I know well that you are no way extravagant, Wilton, and maintain the appearance of a gentleman upon smaller means than many could or would ; but yet, my good youth, you are naturally ambitious ; and there are a thousand wants, necessities, and desires still to be gratified, which at present you neither perceive nor provide for. You are not destined, Wilton, to go on all your life, content in the seclusion of a college, with less than three hundred a year. Every man should strive to fulfil to the utmost his destiny — I mean, should endeavour to reach the highest point in any way which God has given him the capability of attaining. You must become more than you are, greater, higher, richer, by your own exertions. Had my health suffered me to remain here, I could have easily facilitated your progress in political life. Now I must trust your advancement to another ; and you will perhaps think it strange, that the person I do trust it to should not be any of my old and intimate political friends. But I have my reasons for what I do, which you will some day know ; and

before I go, I must exact one promise of you, which is to put yourself under the guidance of the person whom I have mentioned, and to accept whatever post he may think the best calculated to promote your future views. As he now holds one of the highest stations in the ministry, I could have wished him to name you his private secretary, but that office is at present filled, and he has promised me most solemnly to find you some occupation within the next half year. Your allowance shall be regularly transmitted to you till my return; and, until you receive some appointment, you had better remain at Oxford, which may give you perhaps the means of taking your first degree.—And now, my dear boy, that I have explained all this, what were you about to say regarding the adventures you met with in your journey?”

“First let me ask, sir,” replied Wilton, “who is the gentleman you have so kindly interested for me?”

“Oh! I thought you had divined: it is the Earl of Byerdale, now all potent in the counsels

of the King—at least, so men suppose and say. However, I look upon it that you have given me the promise that I ask.”

“Undoubtedly, my Lord,” replied Wilton: “in such a case, I must ever look upon your wishes as a command.”

The conversation then turned to other and lighter matters, and Wilton amused his friend with a detail of the adventures of the preceding night.

“Sir John Fenwick!” exclaimed the Earl, as soon as Wilton came to the events that succeeded the robbery — “He is a dangerous companion, Sir John Fenwick! We know him to be disaffected, a nonjuror, and a plotter of a dark and intriguing character — who was the Duke he met with? Duke of what?”

“On my word, I cannot tell you, sir,” replied Wilton; “I did not hear his name: they called his daughter Lady Laura.”

“You are a strange young man, Wilton,” replied the Earl; “there are probably not two men in Europe who would have failed to in-

quire, if it were no more than the name of this pretty girl you mention."

"If there had been the slightest probability of my ever meeting her again," replied Wilton, "I most likely should have inquired. But my story is not ended yet," and he went on to detail what had occurred during his ride that morning.

This seemed to strike and interest the Earl more than the rest; and he immediately asked his young companion a vast number of questions, all relating to the personal appearance of the gentleman in green, who had been the comrade of his early ride.

After all these interrogatories had been answered, he mused for a minute or two, and then observed, "No, no, it could not be. This personage in green, Wilton, depend upon it, is some agent of Sir John Fenwick, and the Jacobite party. He has got some intimation of your name and situation, and has most likely seen you once or twice in Oxford, where, I am sorry to say, there are too many such as himself. They have fixed their eyes upon you, and depend

upon it, there will be many attempts to gain your adherence to an unsuccessful and a desperate party. Be wise, my dear Wilton, and shun all communication with such people. No one who has not filled such a station as I have can be aware of their manifold arts."

Wilton promised to be upon his guard, and the conversation dropped there. It had suggested, however, a new train of ideas to the mind of the young gentleman—new, I mean, solely in point of combination, for the ideas themselves referred to subjects long known and often thought of. It appeared evident to him, that the question which the Earl had put to himself in secret, when he heard of his conversation with the man in green, was, "Can this be any one, who really knows the early history of Wilton Brown?" and the question which Wilton in turn asked himself, was, "How is the Earl connected with that early history?"

Many painful doubts had often suggested themselves to the mind of Wilton Brown in regard to that very subject; and those doubts themselves had prevented him from pressing on

the Earl questions which might have brought forth the facts, but which at the same time, he thought, might pain that nobleman most bitterly, if his suspicions should prove accurate.

The Earl himself had always carefully avoided the subject, and when any accidental words led towards it, had taken evident pains to change the conversation. What had occurred that morning, however, weighed upon Wilton's mind, and he more than once asked himself the question, "Who and what am I?"

There was a painful solution always ready at hand; but then again he replied to his own suspicions, "The Earl certainly treats me like a noble and generous friend, but not like a father." The conclusion of all these thoughts was, —

"Even though I may give the Earl a moment's pain, I must ask him the question before he goes to Italy;" and he watched his opportunity for several days, without finding any means of introducing such a topic.

At length, one morning, when the Earl happened to be saying something farther regarding

the young man's future fate, Wilton seized the opportunity and replied, "With me, my dear Lord, the future and the past are alike equally dark and doubtful. I wish, indeed, that I might be permitted to know a little of the latter, at least."

"Do not let us talk upon that subject at present, Wilton," said the Earl, somewhat impatiently; "you will know it all soon enough. At one-and-twenty you shall have all the information that can be given to you."

But few words more passed on that matter, and they only conveyed a reiteration of the Earl's promise more distinctly. On the afternoon of that day another person was added to the dinner table of the Earl of Sunbury. Wilton knew not that any body was coming, till he perceived that the Earl waited for some guest; but at length the Earl of Byerdale was announced, and a tall good-looking man, of some fifty years of age, or perhaps less, entered the room, with that calm, slow, noiseless sort of footstep, which generally accompanies a disposition either naturally or habit-



ually cautious. It is somewhat like the footstep of a cat over a dewy lawn.

Between the statesman's brows was a deep-set wrinkle, which gave his countenance a sullen and determined character, and the left-hand corner of his mouth, as well as the marking line between the lips and the cheek, were drawn sharply down, as if he were constantly in the presence of somebody he disliked and rather scorned. Yet he strove frequently to smile, made gay and very courteous speeches too, and said small pleasant things with a peculiar grace. He was, indeed, a very gentlemanly and courtly personage, and those who liked him were wont to declare, that it was not his fault if his countenance was somewhat forbidding. By some persons, indeed — as is frequently the case with people of weak and subservient characters — the very sneer upon his lip, and the authoritative frown upon his brow, were received as marks of dignity, and signs of a high and powerful mind.

Such things, however, did not at all impose upon a man so thoroughly acquainted with courts and cabinets as the Earl of Sunbury,

and the consequence was, that Lord Byerdale, with all his coolness, self-confidence, and talent, felt himself second in the company of the greater mind, and though he liked not the feeling, yet stretched his courtesy and politeness farther than usual.

When he entered, he advanced towards the Earl with one of his most bright and placid smiles, apologised for being a little later than his time, was delighted to see the Earl looking rather better, and then turned to see who was the other person in the room, in order to apportion his civility accordingly. When he beheld Wilton Brown, the young gentleman's fine person, his high and lofty look, and a certain air of distinction and self-possession about him, though so young, appeared to strike and puzzle him ; but the Earl instantly introduced his *protégé* to the statesman, saying, " The young friend, my Lord, of whom I spoke to you, Mr. Wilton Brown."

Lord Byerdale was now as polite as he could be, assured the young gentleman that all his small interest could command should be at his

service; and while he did so, he looked from his countenance to that of the Earl, and from the Earl's to his, as if he were comparing them with one another. Then, again, he glanced his eyes to a beautiful picture by Kneller, of a lady dressed in a fanciful costume, which hung on one side of the drawing-room.

Wilton remarked the expression of his face as he did so; and his own thoughts, connecting that expression with foregone suspicions, rendered it painful. Quitting the room for a moment before dinner was announced, he retired to his own chamber, and looked for an instant in the glass. He was instantly struck by an extraordinary resemblance, between himself and the picture, which had never occurred to him before.

In the mean while, as soon as he had quitted the room, the Earl said, in a calm, grave tone to his companion, pointing at the same time to the picture which the other had been remarking, "The likeness is indeed very striking, and might, perhaps, lead one to a suspicion which is not correct."

“ Oh, my dear Lord,” replied the courtier, “ you must not think I meant any thing of the kind. I did remark a slight likeness, perhaps ; but I was admiring the beauty of the portrait. That is a Kneller, of course ; none could paint that but Kneller.”

The Earl bowed his head and turned to the window. “ It is the portrait,” he said, “ of one of my mother’s family, a third or fourth cousin of my own. Her father, Sir Harry Oswald, was obliged to fly, you know, for one of those sad affairs in the reign of Charles the Second, and his estates and effects were sold. I bought that picture at the time, with several other things, as memorials of them, poor people.”

“ She must have been very handsome,” said Lord Byerdale.

“ The painter did her less than justice,” replied the Earl in the same quiet tone : “ she and her father died in France, within a short time of each other ; and there is certainly a strong likeness between that portrait and Wilton. — There is no relationship, however.”

Notwithstanding the quiet tone in which the Earl spoke, Lord Byerdale kept his own opinion upon the subject, but dropped it as a matter of conversation. The evening passed over as pleasantly as the illness of the Earl would permit ; and certainly, if Wilton Brown was not well pleased with the Earl of Byerdale, it was not from any lack of politeness on the part of that gentleman. That he felt no particular inclination towards him is not to be denied ; but nevertheless he was grateful for his kindness, even of demeanour, and doubted not—such was his inexperience of the world—that the Earl of Byerdale would always treat him in the same manner.

After this day, which proved, in reality, an eventful one in the life of Wilton Brown, about a week elapsed before the Earl set out for the Continent. Wilton saw him on board, and dropped down the river with him ; and after his noble friend had quitted the shores of England, he turned his steps again towards Oxford, without lingering at all in the capital. It must be confessed, that he felt a much greater

degree of loneliness, than he had expected to experience on the departure of the Earl. He knew now, for the first time, how much he had depended upon, and loved and trusted, the only real friend that he ever remembered to have had. It is true, that while the Earl was resident in London, and he principally in Oxford, they saw but little of each other ; but still it made a great change, when several countries, some at peace and some at war with England, lay between them, and when the cold melancholy sea stretched its wide barrier to keep them asunder. He felt that he had none to appeal to for advice or aid, when advice or aid should be wanting ; that the director of his youth was gone, and that he was left to win for himself that dark experience of the world's ways, which never can be learned, without paying the sad price of sorrow and disappointment.

Such were naturally his first feelings ; and though the acuteness of them wore away, the impression still remained whenever thought was turned in that direction. He was soon cheered,

however, by a letter from the Earl, informing him of his having arrived safely in Piedmont; and shortly after, the first quarter of his usual allowance was transmitted to him, with a brief polite note from the Earl of Byerdale, in whose hands Lord Sunbury seemed entirely to have placed him. Wilton acknowledged the note immediately, and then applied himself to his studies again; but shortly after he was shocked by a rumour reaching him, that his kind friend had been taken prisoner by the French. While he was making inquiries, as diligently as was possible in that place, and was hesitating, as to whether, in order to learn more, he should go to London or not, he received a second epistle from the Earl of Byerdale, couched in much colder terms than his former communication, putting the question of the Earl's capture beyond doubt, and at the same time stating, that as he understood this circumstance was likely to stop the allowance which had usually been made to Mr. Brown, he, the Earl of Byerdale, was anxious to give him some employment as speedily as possible, although that employment

might not be such as he could wish to bestow. He begged him, therefore, to come to London with all speed, to speak with him on the subject, and ended, by assuring him that he was—what Wilton knew him not to be—his very humble and most obedient servant.

On first reading the note, Wilton had almost formed a rash resolution — had almost determined neither to go to London at all, nor to repose upon the friendship and assistance of the Earl of Byerdale. But recollecting his promise to his noble friend before his departure, he resolved to endure any thing rather than violate such an engagement; and consequently wrote to say he would wait upon the Earl as soon as the term was over, to the close of which there wanted but a week or two at that time.

In that week or two, however, Wilton was destined to feel some of the first inconveniences attending a sudden change in his finances. Remembering, that, for the time at least, more than two thirds of his income was gone, he instantly began to contract all his expenses, and suffered, before the end of the term, not



a few of the painful followers of comparative poverty.

He now felt, and felt bitterly, that the small sum which he received from his college would not be sufficient to maintain him at the University, even with the greatest economy; so that besides his promise to the Earl, to accept whatever Lord Byerdale should offer him, absolute necessity seemed to force him as a dependent upon that nobleman, at least till he could hear some news of his more generous friend.

It is an undoubted fact, that small annoyances are often more difficult to bear than evils of greater magnitude; and Wilton felt all those attendant upon his present situation most acutely. To appear differently amongst his noble comrades at the University; to have no longer a horse to join them in their rides; to be obliged to sell the fine books he had collected, and one or two small pictures by great masters which he had bought; to be questioned and commiserated by the acquaintances who cared the least for him; — all these were separate sources of great and acute pain to a feeling and sensitive heart, not

yet accustomed to adversity. Wilton, however, had not been schooling his own mind in vain for the last two years; and though he felt as much as any one, every privation, yet he succeeded in bearing them all with calmness and fortitude, and perhaps even curtailed every indulgence more sternly than was absolutely necessary at the time, from a fear that the reluctance which he felt might in any degree blind his eyes to that which was just and right.

A few instruments of music, a few books not absolutely required in his studies, his implements for drawing, and all the little trinkets or gifts of any kind which he had received from the Earl of Sunbury, were the only things that he still preserved, which merited in any degree the name of superfluities. With the sum obtained from the sale of the rest, he discharged to the uttermost farthing all the expenses of the preceding term, took his first degree with honour, and then set out upon his journey to London.

No adventure attended him upon the way; and on the morning after his arrival, he pre-

sented himself at an early hour at the house of the Earl of Byerdale. After waiting for some time, he was received by that nobleman with a cold and stately air; and having given him a hint, that it would have been more respectful if he had come up immediately to London, instead of waiting at Oxford till the end of the term, the Earl proceeded to inform him of his views.

“Our noble and excellent friend, the Earl of Sunbury,” said the statesman, “was very anxious, Mr. Brown, that I should receive you as my private secretary. Now, as I informed him, the gentleman whom I have always employed cannot of course be removed from that situation without cause; but, at the same time, what between my public and my private business, I have need of greater assistance than he can render me. I have need, in fact, of two private secretaries, and one will naturally succeed the other, when, as will probably be the case, in about six months the first is removed by appointment to a higher office. I will give you till to-morrow to consider, whether the post I now offer you is worth your acceptance. The

salary we must make the same as the allowance which has lately unfortunately ceased ; and I am only sorry that I can give you no further time for reflection, as I have already delayed three weeks without deciding between various applicants, in order to give you time to arrive in London."

Wilton replied not at the moment ; for there was certainly not one word said by the Earl which could give him any assignable cause of offence, and yet he was grieved and offended. It was the tone, the manner, the cold haughtiness of every look and gesture that pained him. He was not moved by any boyish conceit ; he was always willing, even in his own mind, to offer deep respect to high rank, or high station, or high talents. He would have been ready to own at once, that the Earl was far superior to himself in all these particulars ; but that which did annoy him, as it might annoy any one, was to be made to feel the superiority, at every word, by the language and demeanour of the Earl himself.

He retired, then, to the inn, where, for the first

time during all his many visits to London, he had taken up his residence; and there, pacing up and down the room, he thought bitterly over Lord Byerdale's proposal. The situation offered to him was far inferior to what he had been led to expect; and he evidently saw, that the demeanour of the Earl himself would render every circumstance connected with it painful, or at least unpleasant. Yet, what was he to do? There were, indeed, a thousand other ways of gaining his livelihood, at least till the Earl of Sunbury was set free; but then, his promise that he would not refuse any thing which was offered by Lord Byerdale again came into his mind, and he determined, with that resolute firmness which characterised him even at an early age, to bear all, and to endure all; to keep his word with the Earl to the letter, and to accept an office, in the execution of which, he anticipated nothing but pain, mortification, and discomfort.

Such being the case, he thought it much better to write his resolutions to the Earl, than to expose himself to more humiliation by speak-

ing with him on the subject again. He had suffered sufficiently in their last conversation on that matter, and he felt that he should have enough to endure in the execution of his duties. He wrote, indeed, as coldly as the Earl had spoken; but he made no allusion to his disappointment, or to any hopes of more elevated employment. He expressed himself ready to commence his labours as soon as the Earl thought right; and in the course of three days was fully established as the second private secretary of the Earl.

The next three or four months of his life we shall pass over as briefly as possible, for they were checkered by no incident of very great interest. The Earl employed him daily, but how did he employ him? — As a mere clerk. No public paper, no document of any importance, passed through his hands. Letters on private business, the details of some estates in Shropshire, copies of long and to him meaningless accounts, and notes and memorandums, referring to affairs of very little interest, were the occupations given to a man of active, energetic,

and cultivated mind, of eager aspirations, and a glowing fancy. It may be asked, how did the Earl treat him too?—As a clerk! and not as most men of gentlemanly feeling would treat a clerk. Seldom any salutation marked his entrance into the room, and cold, formal orders were all that he received.

Wilton bore it all with admirable patience; he murmured not, otherwise than in secret; but often when he returned to his own solitary room, in the small lodging he had taken for himself in London, the heart within his bosom felt like a newly-imprisoned bird, as if it would beat itself to death against the bars that confined it.

Amidst all this, there was some consolation came. A letter arrived one morning, after this had continued about two months, bearing one postmark from Oxford, and another from Italy. It was from the Earl of Sunbury, who was better, and wrote in high spirits. He had been arrested by the French, and having been taken for a general officer of distinction, had been detained for several weeks. But he had

been well treated, and set at liberty, as soon as his real name and character was ascertained. Only one of Wilton's letters, and that of an early date, had reached him, so that he knew none of the occurrences which placed his young friend in so painful a situation, but conceived him to be still at Oxford, and still possessing the allowance which he had made him.

The moment he received these tidings, Wilton replied to it with a feeling of joy and a hope of deliverance, which showed itself in every line of the details he gave. This letter was more fortunate than the others, and the Earl's answer was received within a month. That answer, however, in some degree disappointed his young friend. Lord Sunbury praised his conduct much for accepting the situation which had been offered; but he tried to soothe him under the conduct of the Earl of Byerdale, while he both blamed that conduct and censured the Earl in severe terms, for having suffered the allowance which he had authorised him to pay to drop in so sudden and un-



expected a manner. To guard against the recurrence of such a thing for the future, the Earl enclosed an order on his steward for the sum, with directions that it should be paid in preference to any thing else whatsoever. At the same time, however, he urged Wilton earnestly not to quit the Earl of Byerdale, but to remain in the employment which he had accepted, at least till the return of a more sincere friend from the Continent should afford the prospect of some better and more agreeable occupation.

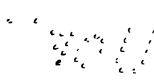
Wilton resolved to submit; and as he saw that the Earl was anxious upon the subject, wrote to him immediately, to announce that such was the case. Hope gave him patience; and the increased means at his command afforded him the opportunity of resuming the habits of that station in which he had always hitherto moved. In these respects, he was now perfectly at his ease, for his habits were not expensive; and he could indulge in all, to which his wishes led him, without those careful thoughts which had been forced upon him by

the sudden straitening of his means. Such, then, was his situation when, towards the end of about three months, a new change came over his fate, a new era began, in the history of his life.

## CHAP. XI.

How often is it that a new acquaintance, begun under accidental circumstances, forms an epocha in life? How often does it change in every respect the current of our days on earth — ay! and affect eternity itself? The point of time at which we form such an acquaintance is, in fact, the spot at which two streams meet. There, the waters of both are insensibly blended together — the clear and the turbid, the rough and the smooth, the rapid and the slow. Each not only modifies the manner, and the direction, and the progress of the other with which it mingles, but even if any material object separates the united stream again into two, the individuality of both those that originally formed it is lost, and each is affected for ever by the progress they have had together.

Wilton Brown was now once more moving at ease. He had his horses and his servant, and his small convenient apartments at no great distance from the Earl of Byerdale's. He could enjoy the various objects which the metropolis presented from time to time to satisfy the taste or the curiosity of the public, and he could mingle in his leisure hours with the few amongst the acquaintances he had made in passing through a public school, or residing at the University, whom he had learned to love or to esteem. He sought them not, indeed, and he courted no great society; for there was not, perhaps, one amongst those he knew whose taste, and thoughts, and feelings, were altogether congenial with his own. Indeed, when any one has found such, in one or two instances, throughout the course of life, he may sit himself down saying, "Oh! happy that I am, in the wide universe of matter and of spirit I am not alone! There are beings of kindred sympathies linked to myself by ties of love which it never can be the will of Almighty Beneficence that death itself should break!"



If Wilton felt thus towards any one it was towards the Earl of Sunbury; but yet there was a difference between his sensations towards that kind friend and those of which we have spoken, on which we need not pause in this place. Except in his society, however, Wilton's thoughts were nearly alone. There were one or two young noblemen and others, for whom he felt a great regard, a high esteem, a certain degree of habitual affection, but that was all, and thus his time in general passed solitarily enough.

With the Earl of Byerdale he did not perhaps interchange ten words in three months, although when he was writing in the same room with him he had more than once remarked the eyes of the Earl fixed stern and intent upon him from beneath their overhanging brows, as if he would have asked him some dark and important question, or proposed to him some dangerous and terrible act which he dared hardly name.

"Were he some Italian minister," thought Wilton, sometimes, "and I, as at present, his

poor secretary, I should expect him every moment to commend the assassination of some enemy to my convenient skill in such affairs."

At length one morning when he arrived at the house of the Earl to pursue his daily task, he saw a travelling carriage at the door with two servants, English and foreign, disencumbering it from the trunks which were thereunto attached in somewhat less convenient guise than in the present day. He took no note, however, and entered as usual, proceeding at once to the cabinet, where he usually found the Earl at that hour. He was there and alone, nor did the entrance of Wilton create any farther change in his proceedings than merely to point to another table, saying, "Three letters to answer there, Mr. Brown—the corners are turned down with directions."

Wilton sat down and proceeded as usual; but he had scarcely ended the first letter and begun a second, when the door of the apartment was thrown unceremoniously open, and a young gentleman entered the room, slightly, but very gracefully made, extremely handsome in fea-

tures, but pale in complexion, and with a quick, wandering, and yet marking eye, which seemed to bespeak much of intelligence, but no great steadiness of character. He was dressed strangely enough, in a silk dressing-gown of the richest-flowered embroidery, slippers of crimson velvet embroidered with gold upon his feet, and a crimson velvet nightcap with gold tassels on his head.

“Why, my dear sir, this is really cruel,” cried he, advancing towards the Earl, and speaking in a tone of light reproach, “to go away and leave me, when I come back from twelve or fourteen hundred miles’ distance, without even waiting to see my most beautiful dressing-gown. Really you fathers are becoming excessively undutiful towards your children! You have wanted some one so long to keep you in order, my Lord, that I see evidently, I shall be obliged to hold a tight hand over you. But tell me, in pity tell me, did you ever see any thing so exquisite as this dressing-gown? Its beauty would be nothing without its superabundance, and its splendour nothing without its

delicacy. The richness of the silk would be lost without the radiant colours of the flowers, and the miraculous taste of the embroidery would be entirely thrown away upon any other stuff than that. In short, one might write a catechism upon it, my Lord. There is nothing on all the earth equal to it. No man has, or has had, or will have, any thing that can compete with it. Gold could not buy it. I was obliged to seduce the girl that worked it; and then, like Ulysses with Circe, I bound her to perform what task I liked. 'Produce me,' I exclaimed, 'a dressing-gown!' and lo! it stands before you."

Wilton Brown turned his eyes for an instant to the countenance of the Earl of Byerdale, when, to his surprise, he beheld there, for the first time, something that might be called a good-humoured smile. The change of Wilton's position, slight as it was, seemed to call the attention of the young gentleman, who instantly approached the table where he sat, exclaiming, "Who is this? I don't know him. What do you mean, sir," he continued, in the same light tone



— “what do you mean, by suffering my father to run riot in this way, while I am gone? Why, sir, I find he has addicted himself to courtierism, and to cringing, and to sitting in cabinets, and to making long speeches in the House of Lords, and to all sorts of vices of the same kind, so as nearly to have fallen into prime ministerism. All this is very bad — very bad, indeed ——”

“My dear boy,” said the Earl, “you will gain the character of a madman without deserving it.”

“Pray, papa, let me alone,” replied the young man, affecting a boyish tone; “you only interrupt me: may I ask, sir, what is your name?” he continued, still addressing Wilton.

“My name, sir,” replied the other, slightly colouring at such an abrupt demand, “is Wilton Brown.”

“Then, Wilton, I am very glad to see you,” replied the other, holding out his hand — “you are the very person I wanted to see; for it so happens, that my wise, prudent, and statesman-like friend, the Earl of Sunbury, having far greater confidence in the security of my noddle

than has my worthy parent here, has entrusted to me for your behoof one long letter, and innumerable long messages, together with a strong recommendation to you, to take me to your bosom, and cherish me as any old man would do his grandson; namely, with the most doating, short-sighted, and depraving affection, which can be shown towards a wayward, whimsical, tiresome, capricious boy; and now, if you don't like my own account of myself, or the specimen you have had this morning, you had better lay down your pen, and come and take a walk with me, in order to shake off your dislike; for it must be shaken off, and the sooner it is done the better."

The Earl's brow had by this time gathered into a very ominous sort of frown, and he informed his son in a stern tone, that his clerk Mr. Brown was engaged in business of importance, and would not be free from it, he feared, till three o'clock.

"Well, my Lord, I will e'en go and sleep till three," replied the young man. "At that hour, Mr. Brown, I will come and seek you. I have

an immensity to say to you, all about nothing in the world, and therefore it is absolutely necessary that I should disgorge myself as soon as possible."

Thus saying, he turned gaily on his heel, and left the Earl's cabinet.

"You must excuse him, Mr. Brown," said the Earl, as soon as he was gone; "he is wild with spirits and youth, but he will soon, I trust, demean himself more properly."

Wilton made no reply, but thought that if the demeanour of the son was not altogether pleasant, the demeanour of the father was ten times worse. When the three letters were written, Lord Byerdale immediately informed Wilton that he should have no farther occupation for him that day, although the clock had not much passed the first hour after noon; and as it was evident, that he had no inclination to encourage any intimacy between him and his son, the young gentleman retired to his own lodgings, and ordering his horse to be brought round quickly, prepared to take a lengthened ride into the country.

Before the horse could be saddled, however, a servant announced Lord Sherbrooke, and the next moment the son of the Earl of Byerdale entered the room. There was something in the name that sounded familiar in the ears of Wilton Brown, he could not tell why. He almost expected to see a familiar face present itself at the open door; for so little had been the communication between himself and the Earl of Byerdale, that he had never known till that morning that the Earl had a son, nor ever heard the second title of the family before. He received his visiter, however, with pleasure, not exactly for the young nobleman's own sake, but rather on account of the letters and messages which he had promised from the Earl of Sunbury.

Lord Sherbrooke was now dressed as might well become a man of rank in his day; with a certain spice of foppery in his apparel, indeed, and with a slight difference in the fashion and materials of his clothes from those ordinarily worn in England, which might just mark,

to an observing eye, that they had been made in a foreign country.

His demeanour was much more calm and sedate than it had been in the morning; and sitting down, he began by a reproach to Wilton, for having gone away without waiting to see him again.

"The fact is, my Lord," replied Wilton, "that the Earl, though he did not absolutely send me away, gave me such an intimation to depart, that I could not well avoid it."

"It strikes me, Wilton," said Lord Sherbrooke, familiarly, "that my father is treating you extremely ill; Lord Sunbury gave me a hint of the kind, when I saw him in Rome; and I see that he said even less than the truth."

"I have no right to complain, my Lord," answered Wilton, after pausing for a moment to master some very painful emotions — "I have no reason to complain, my Lord, of conduct that I voluntarily endure."

"Very well answered, Wilton!" replied the young lord, "but not logically, my good friend.

Every gentleman has a right to expect gentlemanly treatment. He has a right to complain if he does not meet with that which he has a right to expect; and he does not bar himself of that right of complaint, because any circumstances render it expedient or right for him not to resist the ill-treatment at which he murmurs. However, it is more to your honour that you do not complain; but I know my father well, and, of course, amongst a great many high qualities, there are some not quite so pleasant. We must mend this matter for you, however, and what I wish to say to you now, is, that you must not spoil all I do, by any pride of that kind which will make you hold back when I pull forward."

"Indeed, my Lord," replied Wilton, "you would particularly oblige me by making no effort to change the position in which I am placed. All the communication which takes place between your Lordship's father and myself is quite sufficient for the transaction of business, and we can never stand in any other relation towards each other than that of minister and private secretary."

“ Or *clerk*, as he called you to me to-day,” said Lord Sherbrooke drily.

“ The name matters very little, my Lord,” replied Wilton ; “ he calls me *secretary* to myself, and such he stated me to be in the little memorandum of my appointment, which he gave me ; but if it please him better to call me clerk, why, let him do it.”

“ Oh ! I shall not remonstrate,” replied Lord Sherbrooke ; “ I never argue with my father. In the first place, it would be undutiful and disrespectful, and I am the most dutiful of all sons ; and in the next place, he generally somehow gets the better of me in argument—the more completely the more wrong he is. But, nevertheless, I can find means to drive him, if not to persuade him, to lead him, if not to convince him ; and having had my own way from childhood up to the present hour—alas ! that I should say it, after having taken the way that I have taken—I do not intend to give it up just now, so I will soon drive him to a different way with you, while you have no share in the matter, but that of merely suffering me

to assume, at once, the character of an old friend, and not an insincere one. On the latter point, indeed, you must believe me to be just as sincere as my father is insincere; for you very well know, Wilton, that, in this world of ours, it is much more by avoiding the faults than by following the virtues of our parents, that we get on in life. Every fool can see where his father is a fool, and can take care not to be foolish in the same way; but it is a much more difficult thing to appreciate a father's wisdom, and learn to be wise like him."

"The latter, my Lord, I should think, would be the nobler endeavour," replied Wilton; "though I cannot say what would have been my own case, if I had ever had the happiness of knowing a father's care."

Lord Sherbrooke for a moment or two made no reply, but looked down upon the ground, apparently struck by the tone in which Wilton spoke. He answered at length, however, raising his eyes with one of his gay looks, 'After all, we are but mortals, my dear Wil-



ton, and we must have our little follies and vices. I would not be an angel for the world, for my part; and besides — for so staid and sober a young man as you are—you forget that I have a duty to perform towards my father, to check him when I see him going wrong, and to put him in the right way; to afford him, now and then, a little filial correction, and take care of his morals and his education. Why, if he had not me to look after him, I do not know what would become of him. However, I see,” he added in a graver tone, “that I must not jest with you, until you know me and understand me better. What I mean is, that we are to be friends, remember. It is all arranged between the Earl of Sunbury and myself. We are to be friends, then; and such being the case, I will take care that my Lord of Byerdale does not call my friend his clerk, nor treat him in any other manner than as my friend. And now, Wilton, set about the matter as fast as ever you can. There is my letter of recommendation from the Earl of Sunbury, which I hope will break down some barriers,

the rest I must do for myself. You will find me full of faults, full of follies, and full of vices; for though it may be a difficult thing to be full of three things at once, yet the faults, follies, and vices within me seem to fill me altogether, each in turn, and yet altogether. In fact, they put me in mind of two liquids with which I once saw an Italian conjurer perform a curious trick. He filled a glass with a certain liquid, which looked like water, up to the very brim, and then poured in a considerable quantity of another liquid without increasing the liquid in the glass by a drop. Now sometimes my folly seems to fill me so completely, that I should think there was no room for vices, but those vices find some means to slip in, without incommoding me in the least. However, I will leave you now to read your letters, and to wonder at your sage and prudent friend, the Earl of Sunbury, having introduced to your acquaintance, and recommended to your friendship, one who has made half the capitals of Europe ring with his pranks. The secret is, Wilton, that the Earl knows both me and you. He pays you

the high compliment of thinking you can be the companion of a very faulty man, without acquiring his faults; and he knows that, though I cannot cure myself of my own errors, I hate them too much to wish any one to imitate them. When you have done reading," he added, "come and join me at Monsieur Faubert's Riding School, in the lane going up to the Oxford Road: I see your horse at the door — I will get one there, and we will have a ride in the country. By heavens, what a beautiful picture! It is quite a little gem. That child's head must be a Correggio."

"I believe it is," replied Wilton: "I saw it accidentally at an auction, and bought it for a mere trifle."

"You have the eye of a judge," replied his companion. "Do not be long ere you join me;" and looking at every little object of ornament or luxury that the room contained, standing a minute or two before another picture, taking up, and examining all over, a small bronze urn, that stood on one of the tables, and criticising the hilts of two or three of

Wilton's sword, that stood in the corner of the room, he made his way out, like Hamlet, "without his eyes," and left his new acquaintance to read his letter in peace.

In that letter, which was in every respect most kind, Wilton found that the Earl gave a detailed account of the character of the young nobleman who had just left him. He represented him, very much as he had represented himself, full of follies, and, unfortunately, but too much addicted to let those follies run into vices. "Though he neither gambled nor drank for pleasure," the Earl said, "yet, as if for variety, he would sometimes do both to excess. In other respects, he had lived a life of great profligacy, seeming utterly careless of the reproaches of any one, and rather taking means to make any fresh act of licence generally known, than to conceal it. Nor is this," continued the Earl, "from that worst of all vanities, which attaches fame to what is infamous, and confounds *notoriety* with *renown*, but rather from a sort of daringness of disposition, which prompts him to avow openly any act

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to which there may be risk attached. With all these bad qualities," the Earl proceeded, "there are many good ones. To be bold as a lion is but a corporeal endowment, but he adds to that the most perfect sincerity and frankness. He would neither falsify his word nor deny an act that he has committed for the world. His mind is sufficiently acute, and his heart sufficiently good to see distinctly the evils of unbridled licence, and to condemn it in his own case; and he is the last man in the world who would lead or encourage any one in that course which he has pursued himself. In short, his own passions are as the bonds cast around the Hebrew giant when he slept, to give him over into the hands of any one who chooses to lead him into wrong. The consecrated locks of the Nazarite—I mean, purity and innocence of heart—have been shorn away completely in the lap of one Delilah or another; and though he hates those who hold him captive, he is constrained to follow where they lead. I think you may do him good, Wilton; I am certain he can do you no harm: I believe that he is capable, and I

am certain that he is willing, to make your abode in London more pleasant to you, and to open that path for your advancement, which his father would have put you in, if he had fulfilled the promises that he made to me."

## CHAP. XII.

A FEW weeks made a considerable change in the progress of the life of Wilton Brown. He found the young Lord Sherbrooke all that he had been represented to be in every good point of character, and less in every evil point. He did not, it is true, studiously veil from his new friend his libertine habits, or his light and reckless character; but it so happened, that when in society with Wilton his mind seemed to find food and occupation of a higher sort, and, on almost all occasions, when conversing with him, he showed himself, as he might always have appeared, a high-bred and well-informed gentleman, who, though somewhat wild and rash, possessed a cultivated mind, a rich and playful fancy, and a kind and honourable heart.

Wilton soon discovered that he could be-

come attached to him, and ere long he found a new point of interest in the character of his young companion, which was a sort of dark and solemn gloom that fell upon him from time to time, and would seize him in the midst of his gayest moments, leaving him, for the time, plunged in deep and sombre meditations. This strange fit was very often succeeded by bursts of gaiety and merriment, to the full as wild and joyous as those that went before; and Wilton's curiosity and sympathy were both excited by a state of mind which he marked attentively, and which, though he did not comprehend it entirely, showed him that there was some grief hidden but not vanquished in the heart.

Lord Sherbrooke did not see the inquiring eyes of his friend fixed upon him without notice; and one day he said, "Do not look at me in these fits, Wilton; and ask me no questions. It is the evil spirit upon me, and he must have his hour."

As the time passed on, Wilton and the young lord became daily companions, and the Earl could not avoid showing, at all events, some



civility to the constant associate of his son. He gradually began to converse with him more frequently. He even ventured, every now and then, upon a smile. He talked for an instant, sometimes, upon the passing events of the day; and, once or twice, asked him to dine, when he and his son would otherwise have been *tête-à-tête*. All this was pleasant to Wilton; for Lord Sherbrooke managed it so well, by merely marking a particular preference for his society, that there was no restraint or force in the matter, and the change worked itself gradually without any words or remonstrance. In the midst of all this, however, one little event occurred, which, though twenty other things might have been of much more importance and much more disagreeable in their consequences, pained Wilton in a greater degree than any thing he had endured.

One day, when the Earl was confined to his drawing-room by a slight fit of gout, Wilton had visited him for a moment, to obtain more particular directions in regard to something which he had been directed to write. Just as

he had received those directions, and was about to retire, the Duke of Gaveston was announced; and in passing through a second room beyond, into which the Earl could see, Wilton came suddenly upon the Duke, and in him at once recognised the nobleman whom he had aided in delivering from the clutches of some gentlemen practitioners on the King's Highway. Their meeting was so sudden, that the Duke, though he evidently recollected instantly the face of Wilton Brown, could not connect it with the circumstances in which he had seen it. Wilton, on his part, merely bowed and passed on; and the Duke, advancing to Lord Byerdale, asked at once, "Who is that young gentleman? his face is quite familiar to me."

"It is only my clerk," replied the Earl in a careless tone. "I hope your Grace received my letter."

Wilton had not yet quitted the room, and heard it all; but he went out without pause. When the door was closed behind him, however, he stood for a moment gazing sternly upon the ground, and summoning every good and firm

feeling to his aid. Nor was he unsuccessful: he once more conquered the strong temptation to throw up his employment instantly; and, asking himself, "What have I to do with pride?" he proceeded with his daily task as if nothing had occurred.

No consequences followed at the moment; but before we proceed to the more active business of our story, we must pause upon one other incident, of no great apparent importance, but which the reader will connect aright with the other events of the tale.

Two mornings after that of which we have spoken, the Earl came suddenly into the room where Wilton was writing, and interrupted him in what he was about by saying, "I wish, Mr. Brown, you would have the goodness to write, under my dictation, a letter, which is of some importance."

Brown bowed his head, and taking fresh paper, proceeded to write down the Earl's words as follows:—

"Sir, immediately upon the receipt of this, you will be pleased to proceed to the village of

———, in the county of ——, and make immediate inquiries, once more, in regard to the personages concerning whom you instituted an investigation some ten or twelve years ago. Any additional documents you may procure, concerning Colonel Sherbrooke, Colonel Leonard Sherbrooke, or any of the other parties concerned in the transactions which you know of as taking place at that time, you will be pleased to send to me forthwith."

Wilton perceiving that the Earl did not proceed, looked up as if to see whether he had concluded or not. The Earl's eyes were fixed upon him with a stern intense gaze, as if he would have read his very soul. Wilton's looks, on the contrary, were so perfectly unconscious, so innocent of all knowledge that he was doing any thing more than writing an ordinary letter of business, that—if the Earl's gaze was intended to interpret his feelings by any of those external marks, which betray the secrets of the heart, by slight and transitory characters written on nature's record book, the face—he was convinced at once that there was

nothing concealed below. His brow relaxed, and he went on dictating, while the young gentleman proceeded calmly to write.

"You will be particular," the letter went on, "to inquire what became of the boy, as his name was not down in the list found upon the captain's person; and you will endeavour to discover what became of the boat that carried Lennard Sherbrooke and the boy to the ship, and whether all on board it perished in the storm, or not."

The Earl still watched Wilton's countenance with some degree of earnestness; and, to say the truth, if his young companion had not been put upon his guard, by detecting the first stern, dark glance the minister had given him, some emotion might have been visible in his countenance, some degree of thoughtful inquiry in his manner, as he asked, "To whom am I to address it, my Lord?"

The words of the Earl, in directing an inquiry about the fisherman, the boy, the boat, and the wreck, seemed to connect themselves with strange figures in the past—figures which

appeared before his mind's eye vague and misty, such as we are told the shadows always appear at first which are conjured up by the cabalistic words of a necromancer. He felt that there was some connecting link between himself and the subject of the Earl's investigation; what, he could not tell: but whatever it was, his curiosity was stimulated to tax his memory to the utmost, and to try by any means to lead her to a right conclusion, through the intricate ways of the past.

That first gaze of the Earl, however, had excited in his bosom not exactly suspicion, but that inclination to conceal his feelings, which we all experience when we see that some one whom we neither love nor trust is endeavouring to unveil them. He therefore would not suffer his mind to rest upon any inquiry in regard to the past, till the emotions which it might produce could be indulged unwatched, and applying to the mechanical business of the pen, he wrote on to the conclusion, and then demanded, simply, "To whom am I to address it?"

"To Mr. Shea," replied the Earl, "my agent in Waterford, to whom you have written before;" and there the conversation dropped.

The Earl took the letter to sign it; but now that it was done, he seemed indifferent about its going, and put it into a portfolio, where it remained several days before it was sent.

As soon as he could escape, Wilton Brown retired to his own dwelling, and there gave himself up to thought; but the facts, which seemed floating about in the dark gulf of the past, still eluded the grasp of memory, as she strove to catch them. There was something, indeed, which he recollected of a boat, and a storm at sea, and a fisherman's cabin, and still the name of Sherbrooke rang in his ears, as something known in other days. But it came not upon him with the same freshness which it had done when first he heard the title of the Earl of Byerdale's son; and he could recall no more than the particulars we have mentioned, though the name of Lennard seemed familiar to him also.

While he was in this meditative mood, pon-

dering thoughtfully over the past, and extracting little to satisfy him from a record which time, unfortunately, had effaced, he was interrupted by the coming of the young Lord Sherbrooke, who now was accustomed to enter familiarly without any announcement. On the present occasion his step was more rapid than usual, his manner more than commonly excited, and the moment he had cast himself into a chair he burst into a long loud peal of laughter. "In the name of Heaven," he exclaimed, "what piece of foolery do you think my worthy father has concocted now? On my honour, I believe that he is mad, and only fear that he has transmitted a part of his madness to me. Think of every thing that is ridiculous, Wilton, that you can conceive; let your mind run free over every absurd combination that it is possible to fancy; think of all that is stupid or mad-like in times present or past, and then tell me what it is that my father intends to do."

"I really do not know, Sherbrooke," replied his friend; "but nothing, I dare say, half so



bad as you would have me believe. Your father is much too prudent and careful a man to do any thing that is absurd."

"You don't know him, Wilton, you don't know him," replied Lord Sherbrooke; "for the sake of power or of wealth he has the courage to do any thing on earth that is absurd, and for revenge he has the courage to do a great deal more. In regard to revenge, indeed, I don't mind: he is quite right there; for surely if we are bound to be grateful to a man that does good to us, we are bound to revenge ourselves upon him who does us wrong. Besides, revenge is a gentlemanlike passion; but avarice and ambition are certainly the two most ungentlemanlike propensities in human nature."

"Not ambition surely," exclaimed Wilton.

"The worst of all!" cried his friend, "the worst of all! Avarice is a gentleman to ambition! Avarice is merely a tinker, a dealer in old metal; but ambition is a chimney-sweep of a passion: a mere climbing-boy, who will go through any dirty hole in all Christendom only to get out at the top of the chimney. But you

have not guessed, Wilton, you have not guessed. To it! and tell me, what is the absurd thing my father proposes to do?"

Wilton shook his head, and said that he could in no way divine.

"To marry me, Wilton, to marry me to a lady rich and fair," replied the young lord: "what think you of that, Wilton? — you who know me, what think you of that?"

"Why, if I must really say the truth," replied Wilton, "I think the Earl has very naturally considered your happiness before that of the lady."

"As well gilded a sarcasm that," replied Lord Sherbrooke, "as if it had come from my father's own lips. However, what you say is very true: the poor unfortunate girl little knows what the slave merchants are devising for her. My father has dealt with hers, and her father has dealt with mine, and settled all affairs between them, it seems, without our knowledge or participation in any shape. I was the first of the two parties concerned who received the word of command to march and be married,

and as yet the unfortunate victim is unacquainted with the designs against her peace and happiness for life."

"Nay, nay," replied Wilton, almost sorrowfully, "speak not so lightly of it. What have you done, Sherbrooke? for Heaven's sake, what have you done? If you have consented to marry, let me hope and trust that you have determined firmly to change your conduct, and not indeed, as you say, to ruin the poor girl's peace and happiness for life."

"Oh! I have consented," replied Lord Sherbrooke, in the same gay laughing tone; "you do not suppose that I would refuse beauty, and sweetness, and twenty thousand a year. I am not as mad as my father. Oh! I consented directly. I understand, she is the great beauty of the day. She will see very little of me, and I shall see very little of her, so we shall not weary of one another. Oh! I am a very wise man, indeed. I only wanted what our friend Launcelot calls 'a trifle of wives' to be King Solomon himself. Why you know that for the

other cattle which distinguished that great monarch I am pretty well provided."

Wilton looked down upon the ground with a look of very great pain, while imagination pictured what the future life of some young and innocent girl might be, bound to one so wild, so heedless, and dissolute as Lord Sherbrooke. He remained silent, however, for he did not dare to trust himself with any farther observations; and when he looked up again, he found his friend gazing at him with an expression on his countenance in some degree sorrowful, in some degree reproachful, but with a look of playful meaning flickering through the whole.

"Now does your solemnity, and your gravity," said Lord Sherbrooke, "and your not yet understanding me, almost tempt me, Wilton, to play some wild and inconceivable trick, just for the purpose of opening your eyes, and letting you see, that your friend is not such an unfeeling rascal as the world gives out."

"I know you are not, my dear Sherbrooke, I am sure you are not," replied Wilton, grasp-

ing warmly the hand which Lord Sherbrooke held out to him ; “ I was wrong for not seeing that you were in jest, and for not discovering at once that you had not consented. But how does the Earl bear your refusal ? ”

“ You are as wrong as ever, my dear Wilton,” replied his friend in a more serious tone — “ I have consented ; for if I had not, it must have made an irreparable breach between my father and myself, which you well know I should not consider desirable — I must obey him sometimes, you know, Wilton — He had pledged himself, too, that I should consent. However, to set your mind at rest, I will tell you the loop-hole at which I creep out. Her father, it seems, is not near so sanguine as my father, in regard to his child’s obedience, and he is, moreover, an odd old gentleman, who has got into his head a strange antiquated notion, that the inclinations of the people to be married have something to do with such transactions. He therefore bargained, that his consent should be dependent upon the young lady’s approbation of me when she sees me. In fact, I am bound

to court, and she to be courted. My father is bound that I shall marry her if she likes me, her father is bound to give her to me if she likes to be given. Now what I intend, Wilton, is, that she should not like me. So this very evening you must come with me to the theatre, and there we shall see her together, for I know where she is to be. To-morrow I shall be presented to her in form, and if she likes to have me, after all I have to say to her, why it is her fault, for I will take care she shall not have ignorance to plead in regard to my worshipful character."

Wilton would fain have declined going to the theatre that night, for, to say the truth, his heart was somewhat heavy; but Lord Sherbrooke would take no denial, jokingly saying that he required some support under the emotions and agitating circumstances which he was about to endure. As soon as this was settled, Lord Sherbrooke left him, agreeing to call for him in his carriage at the early hour of a quarter before five o'clock; for such, however, were the more rational times and seasons of

our ancestors, that one could enjoy the high intellectual treat of seeing a good play performed from beginning to end, without either changing one's dinner hour, or going with the certainty of indigestion and headache.

## CHAP. XIII.

FAR more punctual than was usual with him, Lord Sherbrooke was at the door of Wilton Brown exactly at the hour he had appointed; and, getting into his carriage, they speedily rolled on from the neighbourhood of St. James's Street, then one of the most fashionable parts of the metropolis, to Russell Street, Covent Garden. The young lord, however, though evidently anxious to be early at the theatre, could not resist his inclination to take a look into the Rose, and, finding several persons whom he knew there, he lingered for a considerable time, introducing Wilton to a number of the wits and celebrated men of the day.

The play had thus begun before they entered the theatre, and the house was filled so completely that it was scarcely possible to obtain a seat.



As if with a knowledge that his young companion was anxious to see the ill-fated lady destined by her friends to be the bride of a wild and reckless libertine, Lord Sherbrooke affected to pay no attention whatsoever to any thing but what was passing on the stage. During the first act Wilton was indeed as much occupied as himself with the magic of the scene; but when the brief pause between the acts took place, his eyes wandered round those boxes in which the high nobility of the land usually were found, to see if he could discover the victim of the Earl of Byerdale's ambition.

There were two boxes on the opposite side of the house, towards one or the other of which almost all eyes were turned, and to the occupants of which all the distinguished young men in the house seemed anxious to pay their homage. In one of those boxes was a very lovely woman of about seven or eight and twenty, sitting with a queenly air to receive the humble adoration of the gay and fluttering admirers who crowded round her. Her

brow was high and broad, but slightly contracted, so that a certain haughtiness of air in her whole figure and person was fully kept in tone by the expression of her face. For a moment or two Wilton looked at her with a slight smile, as he said in his own heart, "If that be the lady destined for Sherbrooke, I pity her less than I expected, for she seems the very person either to rule him or care little about him."

The next moment, however, a more perfect recollection of all that Lord Sherbrooke had said, led him to conclude that she could not be the person to whom he had alluded. He had spoken of her as a girl, as of one younger than himself; whereas the lady who was reigning in the stage box was evidently older, and had more the appearance of a married than a single woman.

Wilton then turned his eyes to the other box of which we have spoken; and in it there was also to be seen a female figure seated near the front with another lady; while somewhat further back, appeared the form of an elderly

gentleman with a star upon the left breast. Towards that box, as we have before said, many eyes were turned ; and from the space \* below, as well as from other parts of the house, the beaux of the day were gazing in evident expectation of a bow, or a smile, or a mark of recognition. Nevertheless, in neither of the ladies which that box contained was there, as far as Wilton could see, any of those little arts but too often used for the purpose of attracting attention, and which, to say the truth, were displayed in a remarkable manner by the lady in the other box we have mentioned. There was no fair hand stretched out over the cushions ; no fringed glove cast negligently down ; no fan waved gracefully to give emphasis to what was said ; but, on the contrary, the whole figure of the lady in the front remained tranquil and calm, with much grace and beauty in the attitude, but none even of that flutter of consciousness which often betrays the secrets of

\* I have not said "the pit," because the intruders of fashion had not then been actually driven from the *stage* itself, especially between the acts.

vanity. The expression of the face, indeed, Wilton could not see, for the head was turned towards the stage; and though the lady looked round more than once during the interval between the acts to speak to those behind her in the box, the effect was only to turn her face still farther from his gaze.

At length the play went on, and at the end of the second act a slight movement enabled Lord Sherbrooke and Wilton to advance further towards the stage, so that the latter was now nearly opposite to the box in which one of the beauties of the day was seated. He immediately turned in that direction, as did Lord Sherbrooke at the same moment; and Wilton, with a feeling of pain that can scarcely be described, beheld in the fair girl who seemed to be the unwitting object of so much admiration, no other than the young lady whom he had aided in rescuing when attacked, as we have before described, by the gentry who in those days frequented so commonly the King's Highway.

Though now dressed with splendour, as be-

came her rank and station, there was in her whole countenance the same simple unaffected look of tranquil modesty which Wilton had remarked there before, and in which he had fancied he read the story of a noble mind and a fine heart, rather undervaluing than otherwise the external advantages of beauty and station, but dignified and raised by the consciousness of purity, cultivation, and high thoughts. The same look was there, modest yet dignified, diffident yet self-possessed; and while he became convinced that there sat the bride selected by the Earl of Byerdale for his son, he was equally convinced that she was the person of all others whose fate would be the most miserable in such an union.

At the same moment, too, his heart was moved by sensations that may be very difficult accurately to describe. To talk of his being in love with the fair girl before him would, in those days as in the present, have been absurd; to say that he had remembered her with any thing like hope, would not be true, for he had not hoped in the slightest degree,

nor even dreamed of hope. But what he had done was this — he had thought of her often and long; he had recollected the few hours spent in her society with greater pleasure than any he had known in life; he had remembered her as the most beautiful person he had ever seen — and indeed to him she was so; for not only were her features, and her form, and her complexion, all beautiful according to the rules of art, but they were beautiful also according to that modification of beauty which best suited his own taste. The expression, too, of her countenance — and she had much expression of countenance when conversing with any one she liked — was beautiful and varying; and the grace of her movements and the calm quietness of her carriage were of the kind which is always most pleasing to a high and cultivated mind.

He had recollected her, then, as the most beautiful creature he had ever seen; but there was also a good deal of imaginative interest attached to the circumstances in which they had first met; and he often thought over them with pleasure, as forming a little bright spot in the midst of a

somewhat dull and monotonous existence. In short, all these memories made it impossible for him to feel towards her as he did towards other women. There was admiration, and interest, and high esteem — It wanted, surely, but a little of being love. One thing is very certain — Wilton would have heard that she was about to be married to any one with no inconsiderable degree of pain. It would have cost him a sigh; it would have made him feel a deep regret. He would not have been in the slightest degree disappointed, for hope being out of the question he expected nothing; but still he might regret.

Now, however, when he thought that she was about to be importuned to marry one for whom he might himself feel very deep and sincere regard, on account of some high and noble qualities of the heart, but whose wild and reckless libertinism could but make her miserable for ever, the pain that he experienced caused him to turn very pale. The next moment the blood rushed up again into his cheek, seeing Lord Sherbrooke glance his eyes rapidly from the

box in which she sat to his countenance, and then to the box again.

At that very same moment, the Duke, who was the gentleman sitting on the opposite side of the box, bent forward and whispered a few words to his daughter: the blood suddenly rushed up into her cheek; and with a look rather of anxiety and apprehension than any thing else, she turned her eyes instantly towards the spot where Wilton stood. Her look was changed in a moment; for though she became quite pale, a bright smile beamed forth from her lip; and though she put her hand to her heart, she bowed markedly and graciously toward her young acquaintance, directing instantly towards that spot the looks of all the admirers who surrounded the box.

The words which the Duke spoke to her were very simple, but led to an extraordinary mistake. He had in the morning communicated to her the proposal which had been made for her marriage with Lord Sherbrooke, and she, who had heard something of his character, had shrunk with alarm from the very idea.



When her father, however, now said to her, "There is Lord Sherbrooke just opposite," and directed her attention to the precise spot, her eyes instantly fell upon Wilton.

She recollected her father's observation in regard to the name he had given at the inn being an assumed one: his fine commanding person, his noble countenance, his lordly look, and the taste and fashion of his dress, all made her for the moment believe that in him she beheld the person proposed for her future husband. At the same time she could not forget that he had rendered her an essential service. He had displayed before her several of those qualities which peculiarly draw forth the admiration of women — courage, promptitude, daring, and skill; his conversation had delighted and surprised her; and, to say truth, he had created in her bosom during that short interview such prepossessions in his favour, that to hear he was the person who now solicited her hand, instead of the creature which her imagination had portrayed as Lord Sherbrooke, was no small relief to her heart. It seemed as if a load

was taken off her bosom ; and such was the cause of those emotions, the expression of which upon her countenance we have already told.

It was not, indeed, that she believed herself the least in love with Wilton Brown, but she felt that she *could* love him, and that feeling was quite enough. It was enough, while she fancied that he was Lord Sherbrooke, to agitate her with joy and hope ; and, though the mistake lasted but a short time, the feelings that it produced were sufficient to effect a change in all her sensations towards him through life. During the brief space that the mistake lasted, she looked upon him, she thought of him, as the man who was to be her husband. Had it not been for that misunderstanding, the idea of such an union between herself and him would most likely never have entered into her mind ; but once having looked upon him in that light, even for five minutes, she never could see him or speak with him without a recollection of the fact, without a reference, however vague, ill-defined, and repressed in her own mind, to

the feelings and thoughts which she had then entertained.

Lord Sherbrooke remarked the changing colour, the look of recognition on both parts, the glad smile, and the inclination of the head.

“Why, Wilton,” he said in a low voice, “Wilton, it seems you are already a great deal better acquainted with my future wife than I am myself; and glad to see you does she seem! and most gracious is her notice of you! Why there are half of those gilded fools on the other side of the house ready to cut your throat at this moment, when it is mine they would seek to cut if they knew all; but pray come and introduce me to my lovely bride, I had no idea she was so pretty. I’m sure I am delighted to have some other introduction than that of my father, and so unexpected a one.”

All this was said in a bantering tone, but not without a shrewd examination of Wilton’s countenance while it was spoken. What were the feelings of the young nobleman it was impossible for Wilton to divine; but he answered quite calmly, the first emotion being by this time

passed — “My acquaintance with her is so slight, that I certainly could not venture to introduce any one, far less one who has so much better an introduction ready prepared.”

“By heavens, Wilton,” replied his friend, “by the look she gave you and the look you returned, one would not have judged the acquaintance to be slight; but as you will not introduce me, I will introduce you; for I suppose, in common civility, I must go and speak to her father, as the old gentleman’s eye is upon me. There! He secures his point by a bow. Dearly beloved, I come, I come!”

Thus saying, he turned to proceed to the box, making a sign to Wilton to follow, which he did, though at the time he did it, he censured his own weakness for yielding to the temptation.

“I am but going,” he thought, “to augment feelings of regret at a destiny I cannot change — I only go to increase my own pain, and in no degree to avert from that sweet girl a fate but too dark and sorrowful.”

As he thus thought, he felt disposed, even then, to make some excuse for not going to

the Duke's box; but by the time they were half way thither, they were met by several persons coming the other way, amongst whom was a gentleman richly but not gaudily dressed, who immediately addressed Lord Sherbrooke, saying, that the Duke of Gaveston requested the honour of his company in his box, and Wilton immediately recognised his old companion of the road, Sir John Fenwick. Sir John bowed to him but distantly; and Wilton was more than ever hesitating whether he should go on or not, when some one touched him on the arm, and turning round he beheld his somewhat doubtful acquaintance, who had given himself the name of Green.

Sir John Fenwick and the stranger looked in each other's faces without the slightest sign of recognition; but to Wilton himself Green smiled pleasantly, saying, "I very much wish to speak a word with you, Mr. Wilton Brown. Will you just step aside with me to the lobby for a moment?"

The recollection of what had passed when last they met, together with the wish of avoiding

an interview with the Duke and his daughter, from which he augured nought but pain, overcame Wilton's repugnance to hold any private communication with one whom he had certainly seen in a situation at the least very equivocal; and merely saying to Lord Sherbrooke, "I must speak with this gentleman for a moment, and therefore cannot come with you," he left the young lord to follow Sir John Fenwick, and turned with the stranger into the lobby. There was no one there at the moment, for at that time the licensed abomination, of which it has since been the scene, would not have been tolerated in any country calling itself Christian. Wilton was indeed rather glad that it was vacant, for he was not anxious to be observed by many people in conversation with his present companion. Not that any thing in his appearance or manner was calculated to call up the blush of idle pride. The stranger's dress was as rich and tasteful as any in the house, his manner was easy and free, his look, though not particularly striking, distinguished and gentlemanly.

The stranger was the first to speak. "Do not alarm yourself, Mr. Brown," he said: "Mr. Green is a safe companion here, whatever he might be in Maidenhead Thicket. But I wanted to speak a word to you yourself, and to give you a hint that may be beneficial to others. As to yourself, I told you when last we met that I could bring you into company with some of your old friends. I thought your curiosity would have carried you to the Green Dragon long ago. As, however, you do not seem to wish to see your old friends, I have now to tell you that they wish to see you, and therefore I have to beg you to meet me there to-morrow at six of the clock."

"You are mistaken entirely," replied Wilton, "in regard to my not wishing to see my old friends. I very much wish it. I wish to hear more of my early history, about which there seems to me to be some mystery."

"Is there?" said the stranger in a careless tone. "Whether any thing will be explained to you or not, I cannot say. At all events, you must meet me there; and, in the mean time,

tell me, have you seen Sir John Fenwick since last we met?"

"No, I have not," replied Wilton. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," replied the other, "Sir John Fenwick is a dangerous companion, and it were better that you did not consort with him."

"That I certainly shall not do," replied Wilton, "knowing his character sufficiently already."

"Indeed!" replied the other. "You have grown learned in people's characters of late, Master Brown: perhaps you know mine also; and if you do, of course you will give me the meeting to-morrow at the Green Dragon."

He spoke with a smile; and Wilton replied, "I am by no means sure that I shall do so, unless I have a better cause assigned, and a clearer knowledge of what I am going there for."

"Prudent! prudent!" said the stranger. "Quite right to be prudent, Master Wilton. Nevertheless you must come, for the matter is now one of some moment. Therefore, without



asking you to answer at present, I shall expect you. At six of the clock, remember, precisely."

"I by no means promise to come," replied Wilton, "though I do not say that I will not. But you said that you wished to tell me something which might be useful to others. Pray what may that be?"

"Why," answered the stranger, "I wish you to give a little warning to your acquaintance, the Duke of Gaveston, regarding this very Sir John Fenwick and his character."

"Nay," said Wilton, "nay — that I can hardly do. My acquaintance with the Duke himself is extremely small. The Duke is a man of the world sufficiently old to judge for himself, and with sufficient experience to know the character of Sir John Fenwick without my explaining it to him."

"The Duke," replied the other, "is a grown baby, with right wishes and good intentions, as well as kind feelings; but a coral and bells would lure him almost any where, and he has got into the hands of one who will not fail to lead him into mischief. I thought you knew

him well; but nevertheless, well or ill, you must give him the warning."

"I beg your pardon," replied Wilton, drawing himself up coldly; "but in one or two points you have been mistaken. My knowledge of the Duke is confined to one interview. I shall most probably never exchange another word with him in my life; and even if I were to do so, I should not think of assailing, to a mere common acquaintance, the character of a gentleman whom I may not like or trust myself, but who seems to be the intimate friend of the very person in whose good opinion you wish me to ruin him."

"Pshaw!" replied the stranger — "you will see the Duke again this very night, or I am much mistaken. As to Sir John Fenwick, I am a great deal more intimately his friend than the Duke is, and I may wish to keep him from rash acts, which he has neither courage nor skill to carry through, and will not dare to undertake, if he be not supported by others. I am, in fact, doing Sir John himself a friendly act, for I know his purposes, which are both rash and

wrong; and if I cannot stop them by fair means, I must stop them by others."

"In that," replied Wilton, "you must act as you think fit. I know nothing of Sir John Fenwick from my own personal observation; and therefore will not be made a tool of, to injure his reputation with others."

"Well, well," replied his companion — "in those circumstances you are right; and, as they say in that beggarly assemblage of pettifogging rogues and traitors called the House of Commons, I must shape my motion in another way. The manner in which I will beg you to deal with the Duke, is this. Find an opportunity, before this night be over, of entreating him earnestly not to go to-morrow to the meeting at the Old King's Head, in Leadenhall Street. This is clear and specific, and at the same time you assail the character of no one."

Wilton thought for a moment or two, and then replied, "I cannot even promise you absolutely to do this; but, if I can, I will. If I see the Duke, and have the means of giving him the message, I will tell him that I received

it from a stranger, who seemed anxious for his welfare."

"That will do," answered the other, "that will do. But you must tell him without Sir John Fenwick's hearing you. As to your seeing him again, you will, I suppose, take care of that; for surely the bow, and the smile, and the blush, that came across the house to you, were too marked an invitation to the box, for such a gallant and a courteous youth not to take advantage of at once."

Wilton felt himself inclined to be a little angry at the familiarity with which his companion treated him, and which was certainly more than their acquaintance warranted. Curiosity, however, is powerful to repress all feelings, that contend with it; and if ever curiosity was fully justifiable, it surely was that of Wilton to know his own early history. Thus, although he might have felt inclined to quarrel with any other person who treated him so lightly, on the present occasion he smothered his anger, and merely replied that the stranger was mistaken in supposing that there was any such

acquaintance between him and Lady Laura as to justify him in visiting her box.

Even while he was in the act of speaking, however, Lord Sherbrooke entered the lobby in haste, and advanced immediately towards him, saying, "Why, Wilton, I have been seeking you all over the house. Where, in Fortune's name, have you been? The Duke and Lady Laura have both been inquiring after you most tenderly, and wondering that you have not been to see them in their box."

The stranger, whom we shall in future call Green, turned away with a smile, saying merely, "Good evening, Mr. Brown; I wo'n't detain you longer."

"Why who the devil have you got there, Wilton?" exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke: "I think I have seen his face before."

"His name is Green," replied Wilton, not choosing to enter into particulars; "but I am ready now to go with you at once, and make my apologies for not accompanying you before."

"Come then, come," replied Lord Sherbrooke; and, leading the way towards the Duke's box, he

added, laughingly, "If there had been any doubt before, my good Wilton, as to my future fate, this night has been enough to settle it."

"In what way?" said Wilton; but ere the young nobleman could answer, otherwise than by a smile, they had reached the box, and the door was thrown open.

Wilton's heart beat, it must be confessed; but he had sufficient command over himself to guard against the slightest emotion being perceptible upon his countenance; and he bowed to the Duke and to Lady Laura, with that ceremonious politeness which he judged that his situation required. Lady Laura at once, however, held out her hand to him, and expressed briefly, how glad she was of another opportunity to thank him for the great service which he had rendered her some time before. The Duke also spoke of it kindly and politely; and the other persons in the box, who were several in number, began to inquire into the circumstances thus publicly mentioned, so that the conversation took a more general turn, till the curtain again arose.

A certain degree of restraint, which had at first affected both Wilton and the lady, soon wore off, and the evening went by most pleasantly. It was not strange — it was not surely at all strange — that a young heart should forget itself in such circumstances. Wilton gave himself up, not indeed to visions of joy, but to actual enjoyment. Perhaps Lady Laura did the same. At all events, she looked far happier than she had done before ; and when at length the curtain fell, and the time for parting came, they both woke as from a dream, and the waking was certainly followed by a sigh on either part. It was then that Wilton first recollected the warning that he had promised to give, and he was considering how he should find the means of speaking with the Duke alone, when that nobleman paused for a moment, as the rest of the party went out of the box, and drawing Wilton aside, said in a hasty but kindly manner, “ Lord Sherbrooke informs me that you are his most intimate friend, Mr. Brown ; and as it is very likely that we shall see him frequently, I hope you will

sometimes do us the favour of accompanying him."

Wilton replied by one of those unmeaning speeches which commit a man to nothing; for though his own heart told him that he would really be but too happy, as he said, to take advantage of the invitation, yet it told him, at the same time, that to do so would be dangerous to his peace. The Duke was then about to follow his party; but Wilton now in turn detained him, saying, "I have a message to deliver to you, my Lord Duke, from a stranger who stopped me as I was coming to your box."

"Ha!" said the Duke with a somewhat important air, "this is strange; but still I have so many communications of different kinds—what may it be, Mr. Brown?"

"It was, my Lord," replied Wilton in a low voice, "a warning which I think it best to deliver, as, not knowing the gentleman's name who gave it to me, I cannot tell whether it may be a mere piece of impertinence from somebody who is perhaps a stranger to your Grace, or an intimation from a sincere friend ——"



"But the warning, the warning!" said the Duke, "pray, what was this warning?"

"It was," replied Wilton, "a warning not to go to a meeting which you proposed to attend in the course of to-morrow."

"Ha!" said the Duke with a look of some surprise — "did he say what meeting?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied Wilton — "he said it was a meeting at the old King's Head in Leadenhall Street, and he added that it would be dangerous for you to do so."

"I will never shrink from personal danger, Mr. Brown," said the Duke, holding up his head and putting on a courageous look. But the moment after, something seemed to strike him, and he added with a certain degree of hesitation, "But let me ask you, Mr. Brown, does my Lord of Byerdale know this? — You have not told Lord Sherbrooke?"

"Neither the one nor the other, my Lord," replied Wilton — "I have mentioned the fact to nobody but yourself."

"Pray, then, do not," replied the Duke; "you will oblige me very much, Mr. Brown,

by keeping this business secret. I must certainly attend the meeting at four to-morrow, because I have pledged my word to it; but I shall enter into nothing that is dangerous or criminal, depend upon it ——”

The nobleman was going on; and it is impossible to say how much he might have told in regard to the meeting in question, if Wilton had not stopped him.

“I beg your pardon, my Lord,” he said; “but allow me to remind you that I have no knowledge whatsoever of the views and intentions with which this meeting is to be held. I shall certainly not mention the message I have brought your Grace to any one, and having delivered it, must leave the rest to yourself, whose judgment in such matters must be far superior to mine.”

The Duke looked gratified, but moved on without reply, as the rest of his party were waiting at a little distance. Wilton followed; and seeing the Duke and Lady Laura with Sir John and Lady Mary Fenwick into their carriages, he proceeded homeward with Lord

Sherbrooke, neither of them interchanging a word till they had well nigh reached Wilton's lodgings. There, however, Lord Sherbrooke burst into a loud laugh, exclaiming —

“Lack-a-day, Wilton, lack-a-day ! Here are you and I as silent and as meditative as two owls in a belfrey : you looking as wise as if you were a minister of state, and I as sorrowful as an unhappy lover, when, to say the truth, I am thinking of some deep stroke of policy, and you are meditating upon a fair maid's bright eyes. Get you gone, Wilton ; get you gone, for a sentimental, lack-a-daisical shepherd ! Now could we but get poor old King James to come back, the way to a dukedom would be open before you in a fortnight.”

“How so ?” demanded Wilton, “how so ? You do not suppose, Sherbrooke, that I would ever join in overturning the religion, and the laws, and the liberties of my country — how so, then ?”

“As thus,” replied Lord Sherbrooke — “I will answer you as if I had been born the

grave-digger in Hamlet. King James comes over — well, marry go to, now — a certain duke that you wot of, who is a rank Jacobite by the by, instantly joins the invader ; then comes King William, drives me his fellow-king and father-in-law out of the kingdom in five days, takes me the Duke prisoner, and chops me his head off in no time. This headless father leaves a sorrowful daughter, who at the time of his death is deeply and desperately in love, without daring to say it, her father's head being the only obstacle in the way of the daughter's heart. Then comes the lover to console the lady, and finding her without protection, offers to undertake that very needful duty. Now see you, Wilton ? Now see you ? — But there's the door of your dwelling. Get you in, man, get you in, and try if in your dreams you can get some means of bringing it about. By my faith, Wilton, you are in a perilous situation ; but there's one thing for your comfort, if I can get out of all the scrapes that at this moment surround me on every side, like the lines of a besieging enemy, you can surely make your

escape out of your difficulties, when you have love, and youth, and hope, to befriend you."

"Hope?" said Wilton in bitter sadness; but at the moment he spoke the door of the house was opened, and, bidding Lord Sherbrooke "Good night," he went in.

## CHAP. XIV.

DURING the greater part of the next day Wilton did not set eyes upon Lord Sherbrooke. The Earl of Byerdale, however, was peculiarly courteous and polite to his young secretary. There was much business, indeed, to be done, and the Earl was obliged to be very rapid in all his movements; but the terms in which he gave his directions were gentle and placable, and some letters received in the course of the day from Ireland seemed to please him well. He hinted even in a mysterious tone to Wilton that he had something of importance to say to him, but that he had not time to say it at the moment, and he ended by asking his secretary to dine at his house on the following day, when he said the Duke of Gaveston and Lady Laura were to be present with a large party.

He went out about three o'clock; and Wilton had not long returned to his lodgings when Lord Sherbrooke joined him, and insisted on his accompanying him on horseback for a ride into the country.

Wilton was at that moment hesitating as to whether he should or should not go to the rendezvous given him by his strange acquaintance, Green. He had certainly left the theatre on the preceding night determined so to do; for the various feelings which at this time agitated his heart had changed the anxiety which he had always felt to know the circumstances of his birth and family into a burning thirst, which would have led him almost any where for satisfaction.

A night's thought, however — for we cannot say that he slept — had again revived all the doubts which had before prevented him from seeking the stranger, and had once more displayed before his eyes all the many reasons which in those days existed for holding no communication with persons whose characters were not known, or were in the least degree sus-

picious. Thus before Lord Sherbrooke joined him, he had fully convinced himself that the thing which he had so great an inclination to do was foolish, imprudent, and wrong. He had seen the man in a situation which left scarcely a doubt of his pursuits; he had seen him in close communication with a gentleman principally known as a virulent and unscrupulous enemy of the reigning dynasty; and he had not one cause for thinking well of him, except a certain off-hand frankness of manner which might easily be assumed.

All this he had repeated to himself twenty times, but yet he felt a strong inclination to go, when Lord Sherbrooke's sudden appearance, and invitation to ride out with him, cast an additional weight into the opposite scale, and determined his conduct at once. It is wonderful, indeed, how often those important acts, in regard to which we have hesitated and weighed every point with anxious deliberation, are ultimately determined by the most minute and trifling circumstance, totally unconnected with the thing itself. The truth is, under



such circumstances we are like a man weighing fine gold dust, who does it to such a nicety that a hair falling into the scale turns it one way or the other.

In the present instance, our friend Wilton was not unwilling that something should come in aid of his better judgment; and ordering his horse to be brought up directly, he was soon beyond the precincts of London, and riding through the beautiful fields which at that time extended over ground where courtiers and ministers have now established their town dwellings.

From the whole demeanour of his companion, from the wild and excited spirits which he displayed, from the bursts of merriment to which he gave way, apparently without a sufficient cause, Wilton evidently saw, that there was either some wild scheme working in Lord Sherbrooke's brain, or the knowledge of some happy event gladdening his heart. What it was, however, he could not divine, and the young nobleman was evidently determined on no account to

explain. He laughed and jested with Wilton in regard to the gravity which he could not conquer, declared that he was the dullest companion that ever had been seen, and vowed that there could be no more stupid and tiresome companion for a long ride than a man in love, unless, indeed, it were a lame horse.

“Indeed, my dear Sherbrooke,” replied Wilton, “you should prove, in the first place, that I am in love, which I can assure you is not the case, before you attempt to attribute my being grave to that reason. My very situation in life, and a thousand things connected therewith, are surely enough to make me sad at times.”

“Why, what is there sad in your situation, my dear Wilton?” demanded Lord Sherbrooke in the same tone of raillery: “here are you a wealthy young man—ay, wealthy, Wilton. Have you not yourself told me that your income exceeds your expenses; while I, on the other hand, have no income at all, and expenses in abundance? Well, I say you are here a wealthy young man, with the best

prospects in the world, destined some day to be prime minister for aught I know."

"And who, at this present moment," interrupted Wilton, "has not a relation upon earth that he knows of; who has never enjoyed a father's care or a mother's tenderness; who can only guess that his birth was disgraceful to her whom man's heart is naturally bound to reverence, without knowing who or what was his father, or who even was the mother by whose shame he was brought into being."

Lord Sherbrooke was immediately grave, for he saw that Wilton was hurt; and he replied frankly and kindly, "I beg your pardon, my dear Wilton — I did not intend to pain you, and had not the slightest idea of how you were circumstanced. To tell the truth, I took it for granted that you were the son of good Lord Sunbury; and thought that you were, of course, well aware of all the particulars."

"Of none, Sherbrooke, of none," replied Wilton. "Suspensions may have crossed my mind that it is as you supposed, but then many other things tend to make me believe that

such is not the case. At all events, one thing is clear — I have no family, no kindred; or if I have relations, they are ashamed of the tie that binds me to them, and voluntarily disown it.”

“Pshaw! Wilton,” exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke — “family! What matters a family? Make yourself one, Wilton. The best of us can but trace his lineage back to some black-bearded Northman, or yellow-haired Saxon, no better than a savage of some cannibal island of the South Sea — a fellow who tore his roast meat with unwashed fingers, and never knew the luxury of a clean shirt. Make a family for yourself, I say; and let the hundredth generation down if the world last so long, boast that the head of the house was a gentleman, and wore gold lace on his coat.”

Wilton smiled, saying, “I fear the prospect of progeny, Sherbrooke, will never be held as an equivalent for the retrospect of ancestors.”

“An axiom worthy of Aristotle,” exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke; “but here we are, my dear Wilton,” he continued, pulling up his horse at

the gates of a house enclosed within walls, situated about a quarter of a mile beyond Chelsea, and somewhat more from the house and grounds belonging at that time to the celebrated Earl of Peterborough.

"But what do you intend to do here?" exclaimed Wilton at this pause.

"Oh! nothing but make a call," replied his companion.

"Shall I ride on, or wait till you come back?" demanded Wilton.

"Oh no! — come in, come in," said Lord Sherbrooke — "I shall not be long, and I'll introduce you, if you are not acquainted."

While he was speaking he had rung the bell, and his own two servants with Wilton's rode up to take the horses. Almost at the same moment a porter threw open the gates, and to his companion's surprise, Lord Sherbrooke asked for the Duke of Gaveston. The servant answered that the Duke was out, but that his young lady was at home; and thus the hero of our tale found himself suddenly, and even most unwillingly, brought to the dwelling of one

whose society he certainly liked better than that of any one else on earth.

Lord Sherbrooke looked in his face with a glance of malicious pleasure; and then, as nothing on earth ever stopped him in any thing that he chose to do or say, he burst forth into a gay peal of laughter at the surprise which he saw depicted on the countenance of his friend.

“Take the horses,” he continued, turning to his own servants — “take the horses round to the Green Dragon, in the lane behind the house, wet their noses, and give them a book to read till we come to them. Come Wilton, come! It is quite fitting,” he said in a lower tone, “that in execution of my plan I should establish a character for insanity in the house. Now that fat porter with the mulberry nose will go and report to the kitchen-maid that I order my horses a book to read, and they will decide that I am mad in a minute. The news will fly from kitchen-maid to cook, and from cook to housekeeper, and from housekeeper to lady’s maid, and from lady’s maid to lady. There will be nothing else talked of in the house but

my madness; and when they come to add madness to badness they will surely give me up, if they hav'n't a mind to add sadness to madness likewise."

While he spoke, they were following a sort of groom of the chambers, who, after looking into one of the rooms on the ground-floor, turned to Lord Sherbrooke saying, in a sweet tone, —

"Lady Laura is walking in the gardens I see, my Lord. I will show your Lordship the way."

"So you have the honour of knowing who my lordship is, Mr. Montgomery Styles," said Lord Sherbrooke, looking him full in the face.

"I beg your Lordship's pardon," said the man, in the same mincing manner — "my name is not Montgomery Styles — my name is Josiah Perkins."

"Well, Jos. Perkins," said the young nobleman, "*I præ, sequor*, which means, get on as fast as you can, Mr. Perkins, and I'll come after;

though you may tell me as you go, how it was you discovered my lordliness."

"Oh! by your look, my Lord: I should have discovered it at once," replied the groom of the chambers; "but his Grace told me that your Lordship was likely to call."

"Oh, ho!" cried Lord Sherbrooke, with a laughing look to Wilton. But the next moment the servant threw open a glass door, and they issued forth into the gardens, which were very beautiful, and extended down to the river, filled with fine old trees, and spread out in soft green terraces and gravel walks. Lord Sherbrooke gazed round at first, with a look of criticising inquiry, upon the gardens; but the eyes of Wilton had fixed immediately upon the figure of a lady who was walking slowly along on the terrace, some way beneath them, at the very edge of the river. She did not remark the opening of the glass door in the centre of the house, which was at the distance of about two hundred yards from the spot where she was at the time; but continued her walk with her eyes bent upon the ground, and one hand play-



ing negligently with the bracelet which encircled the wrist of the other arm. Her thoughts were evidently deeply busied with matters of importance, at least to herself.

She was walking slowly, as we have said — a thing that none but a high-bred woman can do with grace — and though the great beauty of her figure was, in some degree, hidden by the costume of the day, yet nothing could render its easy, gliding motion aught but exquisitely graceful, and (if I may use a far-fetched term, but, perhaps, the only one that will express my meaning clearly,) *musical* to the eye. It must not be understood that, though she was walking slowly, the grace with which she did so had any thing of the cold and stately air which those who assume it call dignity. Oh no! it was all easy: quiet, but full of youth, and health, and life: it was the mere movement of a form, perfect in the symmetry of every limb; under the will of a spirit harmonising entirely with the fair frame that contained it. She walked slowly because she was full of deep thought; but no one who beheld her could

doubt that bounding joy might in its turn call forth as much grace in that young form as the calmer mood now displayed.

Wilton turned his eyes from the lady to his young companion, and he saw that he was now gazing at her too, and that not a little admiration was painted in his countenance. Wilton was painfully situated, and felt all the awkwardness of the position in which Lord Sherbrooke had placed him fully. Yet how could he act? he asked himself—what means of escape did there exist? What was the motive, too, what the intentions, of Lord Sherbrooke? for what purposes had he brought him there? in what situation might he place him next?

All these, and many another question, he asked his own heart as they advanced across the green slopes and little terraces towards that in which the young lady “walked in beauty.” There was no means for him to escape, however; and though he never knew from one moment to another what would be the conduct of Lord Sherbrooke, he was obliged to go on, and take his chance of what that conduct might be.

When they were about fifty yards from Lady Laura, she turned at the end of the walk, and then, for the first time, saw them as they approached; but if the expression of her countenance might be believed, she saw them with no great pleasure. An expression of anxiety, nay, of pain, came into her beautiful eyes; and as they were turned both upon Lord Sherbrooke and Wilton, the latter came in for his share also of that vexed look.

"You see, Wilton," said Lord Sherbrooke, in a low voice, "how angry she is to behold you here. It was for that I brought you. I want to tease her in all possible ways," and without waiting for any reply, he hurried his pace and advanced towards the lady.

She received him with marked coldness and distance of manner; but now the difference in her demeanour towards him and towards Wilton was strongly marked—not that the smile with which she greeted the latter when he came up was any thing but very faint, yet her lip did relax into a smile. The colour, too, came up a little into her cheek; and her manner was a

little agitated. In short — though without openly expressing any very great pleasure at seeing him — it was evident that she was not displeased; and the secret of the slight degree of embarrassment which she displayed was, that for the first moment or so after she saw him, she thought of her mistake of the night before, and of her feelings while she had imagined that the Duke had pointed him out to her as one who, if she thought fit, might be her future husband.

The lady soon conquered the momentary agitation, however; and the conversation went on, principally maintained, of course, between herself and Lord Sherbrooke. Wilton would have given worlds indeed to have escaped, but there was no possibility of so doing. Lady Laura signified no intention of returning to the house; and they continued walking up and down the broad gravelled terrace, which of all things on earth affords the least opportunity for lingering behind, or escaping the embarrassment of being *the one too many*.

Wilton had too much good taste to suffer his annoyance to appear; and though he strove

to avoid taking any greater part in the conversation than he could help, still when he joined in, what he did say was said with ease and grace. Lord Sherbrooke forced him, indeed, to speak more than he was inclined, and, to Lady Laura, there seemed a strange contrast between the thoughts and language of the two. The young nobleman's conversation was light, witty, poignant, and irregular. It was like the flowing of a shallow stream amongst bright pebbles which it causes to sparkle, and from which it receives in return a thousand various shades and tints, but without depth or vigour; while that of Wilton was stronger, more profound, more vigorous both in thought and expression, and was like a deeper river flowing on without so much sunshine and light, but clear, deep, and powerful, and not unmusical either, between its banks.

It was towards the latter that Lady Laura turned and listened, though she could not but smile at many of the gay sallies of him who walked on the other side; but it seemed as if the conversation of Lord Sherbrooke rested in

the ear, while that of Wilton sunk into the heart.

It would not be very interesting, even if we had time, to detail all that took place upon that occasion; but it must be confessed that, though once or twice Lord Sherbrooke felt inclined to put forth all his powers of pleasing, out of pique at the marked preference which Lady Laura showed for Wilton, he in no degree concealed the worst points of his character. He said nothing, indeed, which could offend in mere expression; but every now and then he suffered some few words to escape him, which clearly announced that the ties of morality and religion were in no degree recognised by him amongst the principles by which he intended to guide his actions. He even forced the conversation into channels which afforded an opportunity of expressing opinions of worse than a dangerous character. Constancy, he said, was all very well for a turtledove, or an old man of seventy with a young wife; and as for religion, there were certain people paid for having it, and he should not trouble himself to have any unless

he were paid likewise. This was not, indeed, all said at once, nor in such distinct terms as we have here used, but still the meaning was the same; and whether expressed in a jesting or more serious manner, that meaning could not be misunderstood.

Wilton looked grave and sad when he heard such things said to a pure and high-minded girl; and Lady Laura herself turned a little pale, and cast her eyes down upon the ground without reply.

At length, after this had gone on for some time, Lord Sherbrooke inquired for Lady Mary Fenwick, saying that he had hoped to see her there, and to inquire after her health.

"Oh, she is here still," replied Lady Laura; "but she complained of headache this morning, and is sitting in the little library. I do not know whether she would be inclined to see any one or not."

"Oh, she will see me, beyond all doubt," exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke — "no lady ever refuses to see me. Besides, her great grandmother, on old Lady Carlisle's side, was my

great grandfather's forty-fifth cousin, so that we are relations. I will go and find her out. Stay you, Wilton, and console Lady Laura, till I come back again. I shall not be five minutes."

Thus saying, away he darted, leaving Lady Laura and Wilton alone in the middle of the walk. The lady seemed to hesitate for a moment what she should do, whether she should follow to the house or not, and she paused for an instant in the walk; but inclination, if the truth must be said, got the better of what she might consider strictly decorous, and after that momentary pause, she walked on with Wilton by her side. In saying that it was inclination determined her conduct, I did not mean to say that it was solely the inclination to walk and converse with Wilton Brown, though that had some share in the business, but there was besides, an inclination to be freed from the presence of Lord Sherbrooke, who had succeeded to a miracle in making her thoroughly disgusted with him.

As they walked on, there was a certain de-



gree of embarrassment hung over both Wilton and Laura; both felt, perhaps, that they could be very happy in each other's society, but both felt afraid of being too happy. With Wilton, there were a thousand causes to produce that slight embarrassment, and with Lady Laura several also. But one and a very principal cause was, that there was something which she longed exceedingly to say, and yet doubted whether she ought to say it.

It does not unfrequently happen that a person of the highest rank and station, possessing every quality to secure friendship, with wealth and every gift of fortune at command, surrounded by numerous acquaintances, and mingling with a wide society, is nevertheless totally alone—alone in spirit and in heart—alone in thought and mind. Such was the case with Lady Laura. It is true she had yet but very little experience of the world, and her search for a congenial spirit had not been carried far or prosecuted long; but she was one of those who had learned to think and to feel early. Her mother, who had died three years before, had taught her to do

so, not alone for her own sake, but also for that of her father; for the Duchess had early felt the conviction that her own life would be brief, and knew that the mind and character of her daughter must have a great effect upon the Duke, whom she loved much, though she could not venerate very highly.

With a heart, then, full of deep and pure feelings, with a mind not only originally bright and strong, not only highly cultivated and stored with fine tastes, but highly directed and fortified with strong principles, with an enthusiastic love of every thing that was beautiful and graceful, generous, noble, and dignified — it is not to be wondered at that, in the wide society of the capital, or amongst all the acquaintances who thronged her father's house, Lady Laura had seen no spirit congenial to her own, no heart with the same feelings, no mind with the same objects. In every one she had met with, there had still been some apparent weakness, some worldliness, some selfishness, there had been coldness, or apathy, or want of principle, or want of feeling; and the bright enthu-

sians of her young nature had been confined to the tabernacle of her own heart.

She had seen Wilton Brown but seldom, it is true, but nevertheless she felt differently towards him and other people. There were several causes which had produced this; and perhaps, as Lady Laura was not absolutely an angel, his personal appearance might have something to do with it, though less than might be supposed. His fine person, his noble carriage, his bright and intelligent countenance, the rapid variety of its expressions, the dignified character of the predominant one to which it always returned, after those more transient had passed away — all gave the idea of there being a high heart and mind beneath. In the next place, Wilton had, as we have told, commenced his acquaintance with her by an act of personal service, performed with gallantry, skill, and decision, at the risk of his own life. In the third place, in all his conversation, as far as she had ever known or remarked, there were those small casual traits of good feelings, fine tastes, and strong principles, expressed sometimes by

a single word, sometimes by a look or gesture, which are a thousand-fold more convincing, in regard to the real character of the person, than the most laboured harangue, or essay, or declaration.

Thus it was that Laura hoped, and fancied, and believed, she had now seen one person upon earth whose feelings, thoughts, and character might assimilate with her own. Pray let the reader understand that I do not mean to say Laura was in love with Wilton; but she did believe that he was one of those for whose eyes she might draw away a part of that customary veil with which all people hide the shrine of their deeper feelings from the sight of the coarse multitude.

There was something then, as we have seen, that she wished to say — there was something that she believed she might say without risk or wrong. But yet she hesitated; and she and Wilton went on nearly to the end of the walk in perfect silence. At length she cast a timid glance first towards the house where Lord Sherbrooke was seen just entering one of the

rooms from the upper terrace, and then to the face of Wilton Brown, whose eye chanced at that moment to be upon her with a look of inquiry. The look gave her courage, and she said,—

“ I am going to say a very odd thing, Mr. Brown, I believe ; but your great intimacy with Lord Sherbrooke puzzles me. He told my father last night that you were his dearest and most intimate friend. I always thought that friendship must proceed from a similarity of feelings and pursuits, and I am sure, from what I have heard you say, at least I think I may be sure, that you entertain ideas the most opposite to those with which he has just pained us.”

Wilton smiled somewhat sadly ; but he did not dare deny that such opinions were Lord Sherbrooke's real ones ; for his well-known conduct was too much in accordance with them.

“ Would to Heaven, dear lady,” he said, “ that Sherbrooke would permit me to be as much his friend as I might be ! I must not deny that he has many faults — faults I am sure

of education and habit alone, for his heart is noble, honourable, and high —— ”

“ Nay,” cried Lady Laura — “ could a noble or an honourable heart entertain such sentiments as he has just expressed ? ”

“ You do not know him, nor understand him, yet, Lady Laura,” replied Wilton. “ Most men strive to make themselves appear better than they really are: Sherbrooke labours to make himself appear worse — not alone, Lady Laura, in his language — not alone in his account of himself; but even by his very actions. I am confident that he has committed more than one folly for the sole purpose, if his motives were thoroughly sifted and investigated, of establishing a bad reputation.”

“ What a sad vanity ! ” exclaimed Lady Laura. “ On such a man no reliance can be placed. But his plain declaration, a few minutes ago, is quite sufficient to mark his character, I mean his declaration that he considers no vows taken to a woman, at all binding on a man. Is that the principle of an honourable heart, Mr. Brown ? ”

Wilton was silent for a moment, but Lady Laura evidently looked for a reply ; and he answered at length, " No it is not, Lady Laura ; but I fully believe, ere taking any such vows, Sherbrooke would openly acknowledge his view of them, and having done so, would look upon them as mere empty air."

Lady Laura laughed, evidently applying her companion's words to her own situation with Lord Sherbrooke ; and Wilton, unwilling that one word from his lips should have a tendency to thwart the purposes of the Earl of Byerdale in a matter where he had no right to interfere, hastened to add, " Let me assure you, Lady Laura, however, at the same time that I make this acknowledgment with regard to Sherbrooke, that I am fully convinced, if he were to pledge his word of honour to keep those vows, he would die rather than violate that pledge."

" That is to say," replied Lady Laura, somewhat bitterly, " that he has erected an idol whose oracles he can interpret as he will, and calls it *honour*, denying that there is any other

God. But let us speak of it no more, Mr. Brown. These things make one sad."

Wilton was glad to speak of something else ; for he felt himself bound by every tie to say all that he could in favour of Lord Sherbrooke ; and yet he could not find in his heart to aid, in the slightest degree, in forwarding a scheme which could end in nothing but misery to the sweet and innocent girl beside him. He changed the topic at once, then, and exerted himself to draw her mind away from the matter on which they had just been speaking.

Nevertheless, that subject, while they went on, remained in the mind of each ; and Lady Laura might have discovered — if she had been at all apprehensive of her own feelings — that it is a dangerous thing to do as she had done, and raise, for any eye, even a corner of that veil which hides the heart, unless we are inclined to raise it altogether. Her subsequent conversation with Wilton took its tone throughout, entirely from what had gone before. Without knowing it, or rather we should say, without perceiving it, they suffered it to be mingled with deep



feelings : shadowed forth, perhaps, more than actually expressed. A softness, too, came over it — we must not, though, perhaps, we might, call it a tenderness : the ceremonious terms were soon dropped ; and because the speakers would have been obliged to use those ceremonious terms, if they had spoken each other's names, they seemed by mutual consent to forget each other's names, and never spoke them at all. Lady Laura did not address him as Mr. Brown, and Wilton uttered not the words, “ Lady Laura.” From time to time, too, she gazed up in his face, to see if he understood what she meant but could not fully express ; and he, while he poured forth any of the deep thoughts long treasured in his own bosom, looked often earnestly into her countenance, to discover by the expression the effect produced on her mind.

Lord Sherbrooke was absent for more than half an hour ; and during that half hour, Wilton and the lady had gone farther on the journey they were taking than ever they had gone yet. — What journey ?

Cannot you divine, reader? When Wilton entered those gardens, we might boldly say, as we did say, that he was not in love. When he left them we should have hesitated.

He would have hesitated himself! Was not that going far upon a journey?

However, Lord Sherbrooke at length joined them; and after a moment more of cold and ceremonious leave-taking with Lady Laura, he turned, and, accompanied by Wilton, left the house.

Lady Laura remained upon the terrace walking more rapidly than before, and with her eyes bent upon the ground. Two minutes brought Wilton to the gates of the court-yard; but oh, in those two minutes, how his heart smote him, and how his brain reeled!

"Shall I run for the horses, my Lord?" cried the groom of the chambers — "Shall I go for the horses, my Lord?" exclaimed one of the running footmen who was loitering in the hall.

"No," said Lord Sherbrooke — "we will

walk and fetch them, and taking Wilton's arm he sauntered quietly on from the house.

"Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, this is all very wrong," said Wilton, the moment they were out of hearing.

"Very wrong, Solon!" exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke — "what do you mean? Heavens and earth, what a perverse generation it is! When I expected to be thanked over and over again for the kindest possible act, to be told that it is all very wrong! You ungrateful villain! I declare I have a great mind to turn round and draw my sword upon you, and cut your throat out of pure friendship. Very wrong, say you?"

"Ay, very wrong Sherbrooke," replied Wilton. "You have placed me in an unpleasant and dangerous situation, and without giving me notice or a choice, have made me co-operate in doing what I do not think right."

"Pshaw!" cried Lord Sherbrooke — "Pshaw! At your heart, my dear Wilton, you are very much obliged to me; and if you are not the most ungrateful and the most foolish of all men

upon earth, you will take the goods the gods provide you, and make the best use of time and opportunity."

"All I can say, Sherbrooke," replied Wilton, "is, that I shall never return to that house again, except for a formal visit to the Duke."

"Fine resolutions speedily broken!" exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke: and he was right.

## CHAP. XV.

HAD Wilton Brown wanted an immediate illustration of the fragile nature of man's purposes, of how completely and thoroughly our firmest resolutions are the sport of fate and accident, it could have been furnished to him within five minutes after he left the gates of the house where he had paid an unintended visit.

Lord Sherbrooke seemed perfectly well acquainted with the house and its neighbourhood, and led the way round through a green lane at the back, which presently, in one of its most sequestered spots, offered to the eyes a somewhat large old-fashioned public house, standing back in a small paved court; while planted before it, on the edge of the road, was a sign-post, bearing on its top the effigy of a huge green dragon.

Now, whether it be from some unperceived

association in the minds of the English people between the chimerical gentleman we have lately mentioned and the patron Saint of this island, who, it seems, if all tales were told, was not a bit better than the dragon that he slew; or for what other reason I know not, yet there is no doubt of the fact, that in all ages English vintners have had a particular predilection for green dragons; and that name was so commonly attached to a public house, in those days, that it had not at all struck Wilton Brown that the Green Dragon to which Lord Sherbrooke ordered the horses to be led, was that very identical Green Dragon where his acquaintance Mr. Green had given him the rendezvous.

He might not, indeed, have heard Lord Sherbrooke's order at all; but it is still more probable, that he only did not attend to it, as all his thoughts were taken up at the moment by the discovery of what place Lord Sherbrooke had brought him to. It now, however, struck him—when he saw the Green Dragon standing in the Green Lane, precisely

as it had been described by Green—that it might very likely be the identical house to which he had been directed; and on asking Lord Sherbrooke what was the name of the mansion they had just visited, the matter was placed beyond doubt by his replying, “Beaufort House. The Duke only hires it for a time.”

Brown hesitated now for an instant, as to how he should act. His watch told him that it was close upon the hour to the appointment: curiosity raised her voice: the natural longing after kindred had also its influence; and if the society of Lord Sherbrooke was any impediment, that was instantly removed by the young nobleman saying, “Come, Wilton, as you are an unsociable devil, and seem out of temper, I shall leave you to ride home by yourself.—The truth is,” he added, after a moment’s pause, “I am going upon an expedition, that the character I have given myself to my fair Lady Laura may be fully and completely established on the day that it is given.”

"Nay, Sherbrooke, nay!" cried Wilton —  
"I hope and trust such is not the case."

The other only laughed, and called loudly for his servants and horses.

Well disciplined to his prompt and fiery disposition, his grooms led the horses out in a moment, and the young nobleman sprang into the saddle. Before his right foot was in the stirrup, he had touched the horse with the spur, and away he went like lightning, waving his hand to Wilton with a light laugh.

Wilton's horses and groom had appeared also, but he paused before the door without mounting; and the next moment, a fat, well-looking host, as round, as well fed, and as rosy, as beef, beer, and good spirits, ever made the old English innkeeper, appeared at the door in his white nightcap and apron, and approaching the young gentleman, invited him in with what seemed a meaning look.

"Perhaps I may come in," replied Wilton, "and taste your good ale, landlord."

"Sir, the ale is both honoured and honourable," replied the host. "I can assure you



many a high gentleman tastes it at the Green Dragon."

Bidding his servant lead the horse up and down before the door, Wilton slowly entered the well-sanded passage, and passed through the doorway of a room to which the landlord pointed. The moment he entered he heard voices speaking very loud, there being nothing apparently between that and the adjoining chamber but a very thin partition of wood-work. The landlord hemmed and coughed aloud, and Wilton made his footfalls sound as heavily as possible, but all in vain: the person who was speaking went on in the same tone; and before the landlord could get out of the room again and down the passage to the door of the next chamber, which was some way farther on, Wilton distinctly heard the words, "Nonsense, Sir George! don't attempt to cajole me! I tell you, I will have nothing to do with it. To bring in foreigners is bad enough, when we are quite strong enough to do it without; but I will take no man's blood but in fair fight."

"Well!" exclaimed the other in the same loud and vehement manner — "you know, sir, I could hang you if I liked!"

At that moment the door was evidently opened, and the landlord's voice exclaiming, "Hush! hush!" was heard; but he could not stop the reply, which was, —

"I know that! But I could hang you too; so that we are each pretty safe. This is that villain Charnock's doing. Tell him I will blow his brains out the first time I meet him for spoiling, by his bloody-minded villany, one of the most hopeful plans ——"

But the landlord's "Hush! hush!" was again repeated, and the voices were thenceforth moderated, though the discussion seemed still to endure some time.

Wilton's curiosity was now more excited than ever; and when the landlord brought him a foaming jug of ale, together with a long Venice glass having a wavy pearl-coloured line running up the stalk, he asked the simple question, "Is Mr. Green here?"

On this the landlord put down his head,

saying, in a low voice, "The Colonel will be with you directly : he expects you, sir."

"The Colonel !" thought Brown — "this is a new dignity. However, with his state and station I have little to do, if I could but discover my own."

At the end of about five minutes the conversation in the other room ceased, and in a moment or two more the door was opened, and Green made his appearance. We have so accurately described him before that we should not pause upon his appearance now, had there not been a great change in his dress, which had such an effect as to render it scarcely possible to recognise him.

Now, instead of a military-looking suit of green, he had on a long-waisted broad cut coat of black, with jet buttons ; a light-coloured periwig filled full of powder ; black breeches and silk stockings, and a light black-hilted sword. In fact, he bore much more the appearance of a French lawyer of that day than any thing else. The features, indeed, were there ; but it was wonderful what the highly-powdered

wig had done to soften the strong-marked lines of his face, and to blanch the weather-beaten appearance of his complexion. The suit of black, too, made him look thinner and even taller than he really was; and on his first entrance into the room Wilton certainly did not know him.

“You have come before your time,” he said, “though perhaps it is as well, for I must go out as soon as it is dusk;” and as he spoke he cast himself into a chair, fixed his eyes upon some scanty embers which were smouldering in the grate, and fell into a deep and apparently painful fit of thought. His broad but heavy brow was knitted with a wrinkled frown; the muscles of his face worked from time to time; and Wilton could see the sinews of his large powerful hand, as it lay upon his knee, standing out like cords, though he uttered not a word.

After pausing for a moment or two, his companion thought it time to recall this strange acquaintance to the subject of his coming, and said, “You told me I might see some of my

old friends here, Mr. Green. Let me remind you it grows late."

"Don't be impatient, my good boy," replied the other abstractedly, at the same time rising and drinking a deep draught of the ale—"you *shall* see some of your old friends! Don't you see me?"

"Yes," replied Wilton, "you are an acquaintance, certainly, of some months, but nothing more that I know of."

"Well, well, do not be impatient, I say," answered Green—"you shall see some one else, if I don't satisfy you. But you are before your time, as I said."

He had scarcely spoken, when the door of the little room opened once more, and a woman apparently of no very high class, and considerably advanced in years, so as to be somewhat decrepid, came in. She was dressed in a large grey cloak of common serge, with a stick in her hand, and mittens on her hands, while over her head was a large black wimple or hood, which covered a great part of her face.

The moment Green saw her, he crossed over

and said in a low but not inaudible voice, "Not a word, till all this business is over! They will ruin the cause and themselves, and all that are engaged with them by committing all sorts of crimes. It will plunge him into the greatest dangers, if you say a word."

Much of what he said was heard by Brown; and in the mean time Green aided the woman to disembarass herself of her hood and cloak, taking the staff out of her hand, and at the same time turning the key of the door. The moment that he did so his female companion drew herself up; the appearance of bowed decrepitude vanished; and she stood before Brown a tall graceful woman, apparently scarcely forty years of age, with a countenance still beautiful, and a demeanour which left no doubt of the society with which at one time she must have mingled.

Of Wilton himself the lady had as yet had but one glance, as she first entered the room; for, ever since, Green had stood between them so that she could not see. When she did behold him fully, however, she gazed upon him ear-

nestly, clasping her hands and exclaiming, "Is it — is it possible?"

The next moment her feelings seemed to overpower her — "Oh yes, yes," she cried, advancing — "it is he himself — the same, dear, blessed likeness of the dead;" and casting her arms round the young gentleman's neck, she wept long and profusely on his bosom.

Wilton was surprised and agitated, as may well be conceived. He was not sufficiently ignorant of the world not to know that there are a thousand tricks and artifices daily practised, which assume such appearances as the scene now performing before him displayed. He might, indeed, have entertained suspicions of all sorts of transformations and disguises; but there was an earnestness, a truth, in the lady's manner that was in itself convincing, and there was something more also — there was a most extraordinary resemblance in her whole face and person to the picture which we have before mentioned in the house of the Earl of Sunbury. The features were the same, the height, the

figure: the eyes were the same colour, there was the same peculiar expression about the mouth, and the only difference seemed to be the difference of age. The picture represented a girl of eighteen or nineteen: the person who stood beside him must have seen well nigh forty summers.

Though the likeness was complete, there was a certain difference. Have we not all beheld a beautiful scene spread out in the morning light, full of radiance, and sparkling, and glorious sunshine? and have we not seen a grey cloud creep over the sky leaving the landscape the same, but taking from it the resplendent beams in which it shone at first? So did it seem with her. All appeared the same as in the bright being whom the painter had depicted in her gay day of youth; but that Time had since brought, as it were, a grey shadow over the loveliness which he could not take away.

All these things took from Wilton every doubt; and after he had suffered the lady for a moment to give way to her feelings without a



word : even throwing his arm slightly round her, and pressing her towards him, he said, " Are you — are you my mother ? "

" Alas ! no, my dear boy," she replied, raising her head and wiping away the tears, while the colour rose slightly in her cheek. " I am not your mother, but one who has loved you scarcely less than ever mother loved her son ; one who nursed and fondled you in infancy ; one who has now come from another land but for the sake of seeing you, and of holding once more to her heart the nursling of other years, even more sad and terrible than these."

" From another land !" said Wilton, thoughtfully, while through the dim and misty vista of the past, strange figures seemed to move before his eyes, as if suddenly called up out of the darkness of oblivion by some enchanter's voice. " Another land !" he said, thoughtfully—" Your face and your voice seem to wake strange memories. I think, I remember having been with you in another land, and I recollect — surely I recollect, a pretty cottage with a rose-tree at the door — a rose tree in full bloom ; and tying

the knot of an officer's scarf, and his holding me long to his heart, and blessing me again and again ——”

“Before he went to battle!” said the lady, “before he went to death!” Her voice became choked in suffocating sobs, and she wept again long and bitterly.

“Nay, but tell me more,” said Wilton, “in pity tell me more. Do I not surely recollect his face too?” and he pointed to Green, “and the sparkling seashore?—and sailing long upon the ocean? Tell me more, oh, tell me more!”

“I must not yet, Wilton,” she replied, “I must not yet. They tell me it is dangerous, and I believe it is. Struggles must soon take place, changes must inevitably ensue, and I would not—no, not for all the world, I would not that your young life should be plunged into those terrible contentions, which have swallowed up, as a dark whirlpool, the existence of so many of your race. If our hopes be true, the way to fortune and rank will be open to you at once: or there is no such thing as gratitude in the world. If not, you will have the means of

living in quiet and tranquillity, and if you will, of struggling for higher things; for within six months the whole shall be told to you. Ask me not! ask me not!" she added, seeing him about to speak — "I have promised in this matter to be guided by others, and I must say no more."

"But who is he?" continued Wilton, pointing to Green.

The lady looked first at him, and then at their companion, with a faint, even a melancholy, smile.

"He is one," she replied, "whom you must trust, for he has ever guided others better and more successfully than he has guided himself. He is one who has every title to direct you."

"This is all very strange," said Wilton, "and it is painful too. You do not know—you cannot tell, how painful it is to live, as it were, in a dark cloud, knowing nothing either of the future or the past."

The lady looked down sadly upon the ground.

"There are, sometimes," she said, "certainties which are far more terrible than doubts."

Be contented, Wilton, till you hear more : when you do hear more, you will hear much painful matter, you will have much to undergo, and you will need courage, determination, and strength of mind. In the mean while, as from your earliest years, careful, anxious, zealous, eyes have watched over you, marked your every movement, traced your every step, even while you thought yourself abandoned, forgotten, and neglected : so shall it be till the whole is explained to you. Thenceforth you will rule your own conduct, judge, determine, and act for yourself. We know, we are sure, that you will act nobly, uprightly, and well in the mean while, and that you will do no deed which at a future period may not befit any station and any race to acknowledge."

Wilton mused deeply for several moments, and then raising his eyes to the lady's face, he demanded, in a low tone, " Answer me only one question more. Am I the son of Lord Sunbury?"

The blood rushed violently up into the lady's countenance.

"Lord Sunbury was never married," she exclaimed — "was he?"

"I know not," replied Wilton — "all I ask is, am I his son? I ask it, because he has shown me generous kindness, care, and consideration; and at times I have seen him gazing in my face, when he thought I did not remark it, as if there were some deeper feelings in his bosom than mere friendship. Yet I cannot say that he has ever taught me to look upon myself as his son."

"Your imagination is only leading you into a labyrinth, Wilton," said the personage calling himself Green, "from which you will find it difficult to extricate yourself. Be contented with what you know, and ask no more."

"I much wish, and I do entreat," replied Wilton, "that you would give me an answer to the question I have asked. There might be circumstances—indeed, I may say, that circumstances are very likely to occur, in which it would be absolutely necessary for me to know what claim I have upon the Earl of Sunbury. I have never yet asked him for any thing of

importance ; but I foresee that the time may soon come when I may have to demand of him what I would not venture to demand, did I consider myself but the claimless child of his bounty."

The lady looked at Green and Green at her, and they paused for several minutes. At length she answered, " I will give you a claim upon Lord Sunbury," and she took from her finger a large ring, such as were commonly worn in those days, presenting on one side a shield of black enamel surrounded with brilliants, and in the centre a cipher, formed also of small diamonds. " Keep this," said the lady, " till all is explained to you, Wilton, and then return it to me. Should the Earl's assistance be required in any thing of vital importance, show him that ring, if he be in England, or if he be abroad, tell him that you possess it, and beseech him by all the thoughts which that may call up in his mind to aid you to the utmost of his power.—I think he will not fail you."

Wilton was about to answer ; and though it was now growing dusk, he might have lingered on much longer, striving to gain more inform-

ation, but at that moment there came a sound of many feet at the passage, and the voice of some one speaking apparently to the landlord, and demanding, "Who the devil's horses are those walking up and down there?"

Almost at the same time, a hand was laid upon the latch of the door, and it would have been thrown open, had not Green previously taken the precaution of locking it. He now partially opened it, however, and spoke a few words to those without.

"Go into the next room," he said, "go into the next room — I will be with you directly." He then closed the door again, and turning to Wilton, took him by the arm, saying, "Now mount your horse, and be gone instantly: your time for staying here is over; make the best of your way home, without delay; and only remember, that whenever we meet in future, you do not appear to know me, unless I speak to you. Should you want advice, direction, and assistance — and remember, that though poor and powerless as I seem, I may know more, and be able to do far more, than you imagine — ask for

me here ; or the first time you see me, lay your finger upon that ring which she has given you, and I will find means to learn your wishes, and to promote them instantly—Now you must go at once.”

Wilton saw that the attempt to learn more, at that moment, would be vain : but before he departed he took the lady by the hand, bidding her adieu, and saying, “ At all events, I have one consolation. Since I came here, I feel less lonely in the world ; I feel that there are some to whom I am dear ; and yet I would fain ask you one thing more. It is, how, when I think of you, I shall name you in my own thoughts. Your image will be frequently before me ; the affection that you have shown me, the words you have spoken, will never be forgotten. But there is a pleasure in connecting all those remembrances with a name. It seems to render them definite ; to give them a habitation in the heart for ever.”

“ Call me Helen,” replied the lady quickly. “ Where I now dwell they call me the Lady Helen. I must not add any more ; and now



adieu, for it is time that both you and I should leave this place."

Green once more urged him to depart ; and Brown, with his curiosity not satisfied, but even more excited than ever, quitted the house, mounted his horse, and rode away slowly towards his own dwelling, meditating as he went.

## CHAP. XVI.

“ONWARD! onward!” cries the voice of youth; whether it may be that the days are bright, passing in joy and tranquillity, and we can say with the greatest French poet of the present day—ay, the greatest, however it may seem—Beranger,

“ Sur une onde tranquille,  
Voguant soir et matin,  
Ma nacelle est docile  
Au souffle du destin.  
La voile s'enfle-t-elle,  
J'abandonne le bord.  
(O doux zéphir, sois-moi fidèle!)  
Eh! vogue, ma nacelle;  
Nous trouverons un port”—

or whether the morning is overcast with clouds and storms, still “Onward! onward!” is the cry, either in the hope of gaining new joys, or to escape the sorrows that surround us. It is for age to stretch back the longing arms to—

wards the Past: the fate of youth is to bound forward to meet the Future.

Wilton reached his home, and bending down his head upon his hands passed more than an hour in troublous meditation. All was confused and turbid. The stream of thought was like a mountain torrent, suddenly swelled by rains, overflowing its banks, knowing no restraint, no longer clear and bright, but dark and foaming and whirling in rapid and uncertain eddies round every object that it touched upon. The scene at Beaufort House, the thought of Laura, and all that had been said there, mingled strangely and wildly with every thing that had taken place afterwards, and nothing seemed certain, but all confused, and indistinct, and vague. But still there came a cry from the bottom of his heart: the cry of "Onward! onward! onward! towards the fated future!"

Nor was that cry the less vehement or less importunate because he had no power whatsoever to advance or retard the coming events by a single hour: nor had it less influence because — unlike most men, who generally have some

lamp, however dim, to give them light into the dark caverns of the future—he had not even one faint ray of probability to show him what was before his footsteps.

On the contrary, the yearning to reach that future, to pass on through that darkness to some brighter place beyond, was all the more strong and urgent. In short, excited imagination had produced some hope, without the slightest probability to foster it. He had even been told that he was to expect information of a painful kind. Not one word had been said to give him the expectation of a bright destiny: and yet there was something so sweet, so happy, in having found any one whose tenderness had been bestowed upon his infant years, and whose affection had remained unchanged by time and absence, that hope—as hope always is—was born of happiness; and though that hope was wild, uncertain, and unfounded, it made the natural eagerness of youth all the more eager.

When he lay down to rest he slept not, but still many a vision floated before his waking eyes, and thought made the night seem short.

On the following morning he was early up and dressed; but by seven o'clock a note was put into his hand, in a writing which he did not know. On opening it, however, he found it to contain a request, couched in the most courteous terms, from the Duke of Gaveston, that he would call upon him immediately, and before he went to the house of Lord Byerdale. There was scarcely time to do so; but he instantly ordered his horse and galloped to Beaufort House as fast as possible. He was ushered immediately into a small saloon, and thence into the dressing-room of the Duke, whom he found in a state of considerable agitation, and evidently embarrassed even in explaining to him what he wanted.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Brown," he said, — "I have sent for you to speak on a matter that may be of great consequence: — not that I know that it will be — not that I have heard any thing — for I would not hear, after I found out what was the great object; but — but ——"

Wilton was inclined to imagine that some

unexpected obstacles had occurred in regard to the proposed alliance between the families of the Duke and of the Earl of Byerdale, and he certainly felt no inclination to aid in removing those obstacles. He replied, therefore, coldly enough, "If there is any thing in which I can serve your Grace, I am sure it will give me much pleasure to do so."

His coldness, however, only seemed to increase the Duke's eagerness and also his agitation.

"You can, indeed, Mr. Brown," he said, "render me the very greatest service, and I'm sure you are an honourable and an upright man, and will not refuse me. If you had explained yourself more clearly the night before last, I am sure I would have taken your advice at once, and would not have gone at all; but as it is, I stayed not a moment longer than I could help, and have now broken with Fenwick and Barklay for ever. They vow that I am pledged to their cause and must take a part, but they will find themselves mistaken."

Wilton now found that the good nobleman's fancy had misled him, and that his agitation

arose from something that had taken place at the meeting at the Old King's Head, in regard to which he certainly knew nothing, nor indeed wished to know any thing. He replied, however, somewhat more warmly, —

“In regard to these transactions, my Lord Duke, I know nothing, as I before informed you; but if you will tell me how I can serve you, I will do it with pleasure.”

“I was sure you would, Mr. Brown, I was sure you would,” said the Duke. “You can do me the greatest service, my dear young friend, by promising me positively upon your word of honour never to mention to any one that I went to this meeting at the Old King's Head, or, in fact, that I knew any thing about it. I especially could wish that it be not mentioned to the Earl of Byerdale; for I know that he is a very fierce and vindictive man, and I do not wish to put myself in his power, just at present above all times. Nobody on earth knows it but you and the people engaged in the affair, whose mouths are stopped of course. We left the carriage on this side of Paul's, and I

sent the two running footmen different ways, so that, if you give me your honour, I am quite safe."

"I give you my honour, most assuredly, my Lord Duke," replied Wilton, "that I will never, under any circumstances, or at any time, mention one word of that which has taken place between us on the subject. Rest perfectly sure of that. Indeed, I know nothing; I therefore have nothing to tell. But, at all events, I will utter not one word."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the Duke, grasping his hand with joy and enthusiasm; "thank you, thank you a thousand times, my dear young friend;" and in the excitement of the moment, in his dressing-gown and slippers as he was, he led Wilton out to the room where his daughter was seated, and without any explanation informed her that he, Wilton, was one of his best and dearest friends. He then rushed back again to conclude the little that wanted to the labours of his toilet, leaving Wilton alone with her at the breakfast-table.

"Oh, Mr. Brown," exclaimed Laura, with



her face glowing with eagerness, "I hope and trust that you have settled this business, for I have been most anxious ever since last night. Sir John Fenwick behaved so ill, and quitted the house in such fury, and that dark-looking man who accompanied him back, used such threatening language towards my father, that indeed; indeed, I feared for the consequences this morning."

Wilton evidently saw that her fears pointed in any direction but the right one, and that she apprehended some hostile rencontre between her father and the two rash Jacobites with whom he had suffered himself to be entangled. Knowing, however, that it could be any thing but the desire of such men to call public attention to their proceedings, he did not scruple to give her every assurance that no duel, or angry collision of any kind, was likely to take place; at which news her face glowed with pleasure, and her lips flowed with many an expression of gratitude, although he assured her again and again that he had done nothing on earth to merit her thanks.

The smiles were very beautiful, however, and very grateful to his heart; but he found that every moment was adding to feelings which it was madness to indulge; and therefore, as soon as the Duke had returned, he took his leave, and turned his steps homeward. He knew, indeed, that he should have to encounter the same pleasant danger again that very afternoon; that he should have to see her, to be in the same room, to sit at the same table with her, to speak to her, even though it were but for a moment; but then it would be all under restraint; the eyes of the many would be upon them; there would be no open communication, no speaking the real feelings of the heart, no freedom from the dull routine of society.

He was perhaps five minutes behind his time, but the Earl was all complaisance: the arrangements that he had made for his son; the unexpected facility with which Lord Sherbrooke had apparently entered into those arrangements; the political importance of the alliance with the Duke; the immense accession of wealth to his family; the aspect of public

affairs, were all sufficient to mellow down a demeanour which, to his inferiors at least, was generally harsh and proud. But yet Wilton could not help believing that there was a peculiar expression in the Earl's countenance when that nobleman's eyes turned upon him; that there was a smile which was not a smile of benignity; that there was a courtesy which was not of the heart. Why or wherefore Wilton could hardly tell, but he fancied that the Earl's conduct was what it might be towards a person who had suddenly fallen completely into his power, and whom he intended to use as a tool in any way that he might think fit. He pictured to his own imagination the Earl bidding his victim perform some action the most revolting to his feelings in the sweetest tone possible; the victim beginning to resist; the cold-blooded politician calmly showing his power, and exercising it with bitter civility.

However, the courtesy lasted all day: there was nothing said to confirm Wilton in this fancy; and when he took leave, the Earl reminded him of the dinner hour, adding, "Be punctual, be

punctual, Mr. Brown. We shall dine exactly at the hour; and my cook is a virago, you know."

Wilton did not fail to be to the moment, and he, the Earl, and Lord Sherbrooke, were some time in the great saloon before the guests began to arrive. At length the large heavy coaches of those days began to roll into the court-yard, and one after another, many a distinguished man and many a celebrated beauty of the age appeared. Still, however, the Earl evidently looked upon the Duke and his daughter as the principal guests, and waited in anxious expectation for their coming.

They arrived later than any one, Laura herself looking grave, if not sad, the Duke evidently embarrassed and not at ease. Nor did the particular attentions paid by the Earl to both remove in any degree the sadness of the one or the embarrassment of the other. This was so marked that the Earl soon felt it; and though the sort of determined calmness of his manner, and habitual self-command, prevented him from showing the least uneasiness, yet, from

a particular glance of his eye and momentary quiver of his lip, Wilton divined that he was angry and irritable.

It must be admitted, also, that Lord Sherbrooke did not take the means to put his father more at ease. To Lady Laura he paid no attention whatsoever, devoted himself during the greater part of the evening to a beautiful woman of not the most pure and unsullied character in the world, and showed himself disposed to flirt with every body, except the very person to whom his father wished him to pay court. The dinner party was followed by an entertainment in the evening; and still the same scene went on; till at length the Earl came round to Wilton, and said in a low voice, "I wish, my dear young gentleman, you would try your influence upon Sherbrooke."

The Earl was going on, but Wilton rose immediately, saying, "I understand you, my Lord," and approaching the place where Lord Sherbrooke was seated, he waited till the laughter which was going on around him was over, and then said in a low voice, "For pity's

sake, Sherbrooke, and for decency's sake, do pay some attention to the Duke and his daughter ; remember they are new guests of your father's, and merit, at all events, some respect."

The young Lord looked up in his friend's countenance with a malicious smile, replying, " They do, my dear Wilton, they do ! and you see I keep at a respectful distance. But I will do any thing to please."

He accordingly rose from his seat, and Wilton saw him first approach the Duke, speak a few words to him, and then take a seat beside Lady Laura. Her air was evidently cold and reserved, but what passed more, Wilton, of course, did not know. The young lord, however, seemed suddenly struck by something that she said, turned quickly towards her, and made a rejoinder ; she answered, apparently, with perfect calmness. But the instant after, Lord Sherbrooke rose from his chair, made her a low bow, and was crossing the room. His father, however, met him half-way, and they spoke for a moment or two. The Earl's cheek

became very red, and his brow contracted; but Lord Sherbrooke passed quietly on, and came up to where Wilton stood.

"She has just told me what she thinks of my character, Wilton," said the young nobleman, "and I have transmitted the same to my father, who must settle the matter with the Duke as he likes."

"The Earl's plans are certainly in a prosperous condition," thought Wilton; and though he could not, of course, approve of the uncere- monious means which Lord Sherbrooke took to defeat his father's intentions, and to cast the burden of refusal on Lady Laura, yet he could not grieve, it must be admitted, that she should have the means of judging rightly and deter- mining for herself.

During the whole evening her conduct to- wards Wilton Brown had been exactly what he had expected — kind, gentle, and cour- teous. She evidently treated him more as a friend than any one else in the room; and though he purposely spoke to her but seldom,

and then merely with the terms of formal respect, yet whenever he did approach her, she greeted him with a smile, which showed that his society was not at all unpleasant to her.

To the eyes of Wilton it was very evident that Lord Byerdale was extremely irritated by what he had heard. No one else perceived it, however, for, as was usual with him, the irritation of the moment, though likely to produce very serious effects at an after period, clothed itself for the time in additional smiles and stately courtesies, only appearing now and then in an additional drop of sarcastic bitterness mingling with all the civil things that he said. As usual, also, he was peculiarly soft and reverential in his manner towards those with whom he was most angry, and the Duke and Lady Laura were more the objects of his particular attention than ever. He sat beside her; he talked to her; he paid her that marked attention which his son had neglected to offer; and at length, when the Duke proposed to retire, he himself handed her to the carriage, paying her some well turned compliment at every step,



and relieving his heart of its bitterness by some stinging sneer at the rest of womankind.

Thus passed over the evening; and Wilton, it must be acknowledged with a mind more at ease on account of the decided part that Lady Laura seemed to have taken, slept soundly and dreamt happily, though he still resolved, sooner or later, to crush feelings which could only end in misery.

On the following morning he went to the house of Lord Byerdale at the usual hour, and proceeded at once to the cabinet of the Earl. It was already occupied by that nobleman and his son, however; and though there were no loud words spoken, no angry tones audible, yet there were sufficient indications of angry feeling, at least on the part of the Earl, to make Wilton immediately pause and draw back a step.

"Come in, come in," said the Earl — "you know all this affair, and I believe have done what you could to make this young man reasonable."

Wilton accordingly entered the room, and Lord Byerdale again turned to his son, laying

his finger upon the letter before him. "I repeat, Sherbrooke," he said, "that you yourself have done all this. I did not ask you, sir, to be virtuous, I did not ask you to be temperate, I did not bid you cast away the dice or abandon drunkenness and revelling, or turn off three or four of your mistresses, or to give over going to the resort of every sort of vice in the metropolis. I asked you none of these things, because it would be hard and ungenerous to require a man to do what his nature and habits render perfectly impossible. I might as well ask the dog not to turn to his vomit again, or the sow to refrain from wallowing in the mire."

"Savoury similes, my Lord," said Lord Sherbrooke—"most worthy of Solomon and your Lordship. May I ask what it is you did demand then?"

"That you should assume a virtue if you had it not," replied Lord Byerdale; "that you should put a certain cloak of decency over your vices, and that you should at least be commonly courteous to the person selected for your future wife: especially when I pointed out

to you the immense, the inconceivable advantages of such an alliance not only to you but to me."

"Well, but, my dear father," said Lord Sherbrooke, "I will grant all that you say. It is altogether my fault; I have behaved very stupidly, very wildly, very rudely, very viciously. But there is no reason that you should be so angry with the young lady, or with my good Lord Duke."

"Ay, sir! think you so?" said the Earl — "you are mighty wise in your own conceit. You have had your share, certainly; but I do not avenge myself on my own son. They have had their share, however, too. Their pride, their would-be importance, their insufferable arrogance, which makes them think that kings or princes are not too good for her—these have all had no light share; and if I live for six months I will bring that pride down to the very lowest pitch. I will degrade her till she thinks herself a servant wench."

Wilton certainly did feel his blood boil, but he knew that he had neither any right nor any

power to interfere; and he turned to some papers that were upon the tables, and hid the expression which his thoughts might communicate to his countenance, by apparent attention to something else.

Some more words passed between the father and son, but they were few. Lord Sherbrooke, upon the whole, behaved better than Wilton could have expected. He neither treated the subject lightly and jocularly as he was accustomed to do in most cases, nor bitterly and sarcastically, which his father's evident want of principle in the whole business gave him but too fair an opportunity of doing. He acknowledged fairly and straight-forwardly his errors and his vices; and all that he said in regard to the offence he had given his father was, that he imagined he could not in honour suffer Lady Laura to decide without letting her know the character at least of the man who was proposed for her husband.

"Well, sir," replied his father sharply, "you have convinced her of your character very soon. Mine, she may be longer in finding out; but

she shall not fail to be made equally well aware of it in the end."

Thus saying, he turned and quitted the room, giving some casual directions to Wilton as he passed.

"Well, that business is so far done and over," exclaimed Lord Sherbrooke, as soon as his father was gone; "and, as it is pleasant, my dear Wilton, to do a good action now and then, by way of a change, you and I must enter into a conspiracy together, to prevent my worthy, subtle, and revengeful father from executing any of his well-laid schemes against this poor girl, who has only done her duty to herself, and to me, and to her father."

"I trust," replied Wilton, "that the Earl's threat was but one of those bursts of disappointment which will pass away with time. I cannot imagine that, after a little consideration, he will have any inclination really to injure either the Duke or his daughter; nor, indeed, do I see that he could have the means either."

Lord Sherbrooke shook his head with a gloomy air, and answered, "He will make them,

Wilton — he will make the means; and as to inclination, you do not know him as well as I do. He will not forget what has occurred this day, as long as he remembers how to write his own name. This same goodly desire of revenge is henceforth a part of his nature, and nothing will ever remove it, unless self-interest or ambition be brought into action against it.”

“ But what sort of revenge think you he will seek ?” demanded Wilton — “ situated as the Duke is, I see no opportunity that your father can have of injuring him.”

“ Heaven only knows,” replied Lord Sherbrooke. “ The fire will go on smouldering for months, perhaps for years, but it will not go out. He said, just before you came in, that because she had refused to marry me, he would make her marry a footman; and, as I really believe his Lordship is occasionally endowed with superhuman powers of executing what he thinks fit, it would not surprise me at all to see my Lady Laura led to the altar by John Noakes, our porter’s son, dressed up for the occasion as a foreign prince.”

“ I do not fear that,” replied Wilton with a smile; “ I should rather apprehend that he may entangle the good Duke, who does not seem overburdened with sense, in some of these sad plots which are daily taking place. Should we find out that such is the case, we may indeed aid in preventing it.”

Lord Sherbrooke shook his head. “ It is the poor girl he will aim at first, depend upon it,” the young nobleman answered. “ I wish to Heaven she had told me her intention of refusing me in such a formal manner; I would have shown her how to manage the matter without calling down this storm. But, instead of that, she sits down and deliberately writes him a letter, which, just in the proportion that it is honest, true, and straight-forward, is the thing best calculated to excite his wrath. Yet, as if she had some idea of his character, and wished to shield her father, she takes the whole responsibility of the thing upon herself, telling him that the Duke had pressed her much upon the subject, but that she felt it would be utterly impossible to give her hand to your very humble

servant. All this has, of course, brought the storm more directly upon herself, though her father will be screened thereby in no degree. — I doubt not he has gone there now."

"Do you think there is any chance of an actual and open quarrel between them?" demanded Wilton.

"Not in the least," answered Lord Sherbrooke with a scoff: "my dear Wilton, you must be as blind as a mole, if you do not see that my father, though as brave as a lion, is not a man to quarrel with any one. He is a great deal too good a politician for that; he knows that in quarrelling with any one he hates, he must suffer something himself, and may suffer a good deal. No, no, he takes a better plan, and contrives to make his enemies suffer while he suffers not at all. In general, if you see him particularly civil to any body, you may suppose that he looks upon them as an enemy, and is busy in getting them quietly into his power. Quarrel with the Duke? Oh no, a thousand to one, ere half an hour be over, he will be shaking him cordially by the hand, putting



him quite at his ease, begging him to let the matter be forgotten altogether; saying that it was natural he should seek so illustrious an alliance, which, indeed, he had scarcely a right to hope for. Then he will see the lady herself, and say that he perfectly enters into her feelings, that a person so richly gifted as herself, and having already all that wealth and rank can give, has a right to consult, before all other things, the feelings of her own heart. — It would not surprise me at all if he were to offer to send me abroad again, lest my presence in London, after the pretensions which have been formed, should prove, in any degree, annoying to her.”

The conversation continued for some time longer in the same strain; and Wilton could not but feel that Lord Sherbrooke gave an accurate though a terrible picture of his father's character.

At length the young nobleman rose as if to depart; but standing ere he did so before the table at which his young friend was seated,

he gazed upon his face earnestly and silently for a minute or two, and then said, —

“ I don't know why, Wilton, but I have a great and a strong regard for you, and I have been dreaming dreams for you, that I see you are unwilling to dream for yourself. However, you must have the same regard for me ; and — even if you are not inclined, in any degree, to take advantage of what I must say is evident regard on the part of this young lady towards you — yet, for my sake, you must let me know, aid me, and assist me, if you should see any scheme forming against her happiness or peace. I am not so bad, Wilton, even as I seem to you. I am sorry for this girl — really sorry for her. I ought to have taken the burden upon my own shoulders, instead of casting it upon hers ; for I could have removed all these difficulties by speaking one single word. But that word would have cost me much to speak, and I shrunk from saying it. If, however, I find that through my fault she is likely to suffer, I will speak that word, Wilton, at all risks, so you must give me help and support, at least in doing what is right.”

"That I will, Sherbrooke," replied Wilton, grasping his hand, "that I will most zealously. But in regard to what you say of Lady Laura's kind feeling towards me, depend upon it you are wholly mistaken. The only reason, be you sure, why she makes any difference in her manner towards me, and towards men of higher rank than myself, is that she knows the difference of our station and fortunes must ever prevent my entertaining any of those hopes which others might justly feel."

Before Wilton concluded, Lord Sherbrooke had cast himself into a chair; his eyes were fixed on the ground, his brow had become contracted. It was one of those moments, when, as he said, his evil spirit was upon him; and seeing that such was the case, Wilton left him to his own meditations, and proceeded to write the letters which the Earl had directed him to despatch.

In about half an hour, the young nobleman roused himself from his reverie, with a light laugh, apparently causeless; and without speaking another word to Wilton, quitted the room.

